



**Universidade de
Aveiro
2009**

Secção Autónoma de Ciências Sociais,
Jurídicas e Políticas

**ANTONIO ROMERAL
RAMOS**

**O ACESSO NAS UNIVERSIDADES PRIVADAS DO
JAPÃO – UNIVERSIDADE J.F. OBERLIN**

**ACCESS IN PRIVATE UNIVERSITY IN JAPAN - J.F.
OBERLIN UNIVERSITY CASE STUDY**



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Thesis presented to the University of Aveiro to fulfil the formalities essential to obtain the degree of European Master in Higher Education (Erasmus Mundus), done under the scientific supervision of Dra. Maria Teresa Geraldo Carvalho, auxiliary professor of the Autonomous Section of Social, Juridical and Political Sciences of the University of Aveiro and co-supervision of Dr. Akira Tachi professor of the Oberlin University.

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Presidente

Doutor Rui Armando Gomes Santiago

Professor Associado com Agregação da Universidade de Aveiro

Doutora Maria João Machado Pires da Rosa

Professora Auxiliar da Universidade de Aveiro

Doutora Maria Teresa Geraldo Carvalho

Professora Auxiliar da Universidade de Aveiro

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Antonio Romeral

Aveiro, Portugal, October 2009

Palavras-chave

Ensino superior japonês; Acesso; Universidade privada; Políticas de Acesso; nível institucional

Resumo

A presente dissertação visa analisar como as questões sociais e políticas influenciam as condições de acesso nas universidades privadas do Japão. O estudo de caso foi a estratégia adoptada para explorar as políticas de acesso, tendo em conta os factores sociais, políticos e académicos do contexto japonês. A Universidade J.F. Oberlin foi o caso usado para este propósito.

A história, economia e tradições da sociedade japonesa, ainda que em diferentes medidas, sempre influenciaram significativamente as políticas de acesso ao ensino superior e são por isso inseparáveis desta análise.

Os dois momentos mais importantes a nível político nesta temática são o processo de desregulamentação, ou seja, a transferência de controlo do governo central para o poder do governo regional, local e institucional durante o mandato de Nakasone (primeiro-ministro japonês), e, posteriormente a privatização de instituições públicas. Consequentemente, estas foram adquirindo maior autonomia durante o governo de Koizumi, sucessor de Nakasone. As mudanças sociais são visíveis pelo número decrescente de alunos que concluem o ensino secundário, a grande variedade de novos candidatos ao ensino superior e a falta de confiança neste sector. Estes dois factores exigiram dos decisores políticos e aos líderes institucionais soluções para estes problemas nacionais. As preocupações académicas foram atenuadas com maior grau de autonomia e consequentemente maior responsabilidade.

O grande sistema de ensino superior japonês (maioritariamente composto por instituições privadas) enfrenta grande competitividade para atrair estudantes qualificados. Desta forma, as instituições têm que gerir cuidadosamente as suas políticas de acesso de forma a assegurar simultaneamente qualidade e um número satisfatório de matrículas para garantir a sua existência e futuro.

No entanto, ao desenvolver os seus processos de admissão com êxito, as instituições têm que considerar vários obstáculos ao mesmo tempo que facilitam este processo. O carácter específico de cada instituição é um factor extremamente importante na distinção das melhores instituições que, em tal processo competitivo, precisam de procurar melhorar constantemente e alcançar maior prestígio.

Keywords

Japanese higher education, Access, Private university, Access Policy and Institutional Level.

Abstract

The present thesis aims to analyse how social and policy issues influence access conditions to private universities in Japan. The case study is the strategy adopted to explore the implementation policy under social, political and academic factors in Japanese context. J.F. Oberlin University was the case chosen to achieve this goal.

Those factors were at completely different level although with enormous influences in Japanese higher education access, moreover they were dramatically connected and clearly associate with that context. Japanese society, history, economy, tradition and develop have been always significant influences in Japanese higher education context.

The two main factors at policy level were the deregulation process from central governmental control to local, regional and institutional power under Nakasone cabinet and afterward the privatization of public institutions and increase autonomy of private institutions under Koizumi cabinet. Social changes were represented by the decreasing high school graduate population, the wide variety of the new applicants and the lack of trust in tertiary education. Both stage demanded to policy-makers and institutions leaders to face serious problems at national level. The academic concern was dealt by the institutions with wide freedom and strong responsibility. The large Japanese system (basically private institution) faces a strong competition to attract enough and well qualify students. Therefore, institutions need to achieve their best admission policy procedures in order to assure, simultaneously, quality and a successful enrolment for its existence and a booming future.

Nevertheless, in order to develop a success admission process, institutions have to consider several hurdles and facilitate. The specific and unique character of each institution would be an extremely important factor to characterize and distinguish them. In the tough competition process institutions need to improve and increase their prestige. The efficiency to measure the wide variety rank of student skills, motivations and backgrounds is an important process in order to build up a future and successful institution.

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Abbreviations

AO	Admission Office
CRUEE	Council for Reform in University Entrance Examination
EU	European Union
GPA	Grade Point Average
JUAA	Japanese University Accreditation Association
LLL	Life Long Learning
METI	Minister of Economy, Trade and Industry
MEXT	Minister of Education in Japan
NCED	National Center of Education Reform
NCUEE	National Center University Entrance Examination
NIAD	National Institution for Academic Degree
NIAD-EU	National Institution for Academic Degree and University Evaluation
OECD	Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development
TOEFL:	Test of English as a Foreign Language
UK	United Kingdom
UNESCO	United Nations' Education, Scientific and Cultural Organization
US	United States
WW II	World War Second

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1 Introduction

The initial chapter of this thesis provides essential information about the aim of the study. The chapter is structured in the following order: motivation of the study, research problem and research questions, purpose of the study and its significance.

1.1 Motivation of the study

The motivation for this study field lies on the rapid changes in the Japanese society. It is well known how modern and complex Japanese society is. Looking at the number of their population 120.000.000 (Maruyama, 2008) and then the number of higher education institutions¹ (726 in 2005) is easier to figure out the complexity of their education system. The post-massificated higher education system has to be really active and up to date in order to survive in an extremely tough and competitive environment. The two different systems, public and private, are getting closer and competing more directly. In this sense both are facing similar problems especially with the decrease in demand. Nevertheless this may have different effects in each system. For the private sector the tuition fees, that students pay are the main sources of income and means a rise 90% of their institutional budgets. However the public sector is also aware of the increasing lack of students and the difficult times which are coming ahead. In this context universities are struggling for enough students and students are competing to be admitted in the most prestigious institutions.

Private institutions' occupy an importance place on the higher education system in Japan since almost 80% of the higher education institutions are private². Private institutions do not have enough economic governmental support and the dramatic decreasing of high school graduate student population as their main sources of incomes makes the situation difficult to hold. Moreover the large private system competition, the social demands asking for more quality and the need to gain good reputation in order to attract enough and high quality students is a basic priority for every institution.

¹ <http://www.mext.go.jp/english/statist/06060808/pdf/078.pdf>

² <http://www.mext.go.jp/english/statist/06060808/pdf/078.pdf>

1.2 Research problem and research questions

In order to set up the aim of the study, the research problem has been formulated as follows:

How changes in higher education environment and, more specifically, on national regulations over access, affect private institutions access policies?

Taking the research problem as a starting point the research questions help to narrow down and focus on the research process:

1. How do changes in institutional environment and policy regulations affect private institutions policies over access?
2. How are private universities reacting to the new external environment and policy regulations over students' access to higher education?
3. Which methods do private universities (J.F. Oberlin University) use to select “the best” students?

Based on what has been exposed in the motivation of the study section, the role of the institutions as an individual agent is dramatically important in order to implement the current education policy reforms. The single culture of each university with its unique and distinct values, aims and goals can play an important role on the institutional policies development on access as an answer to the environmental challenges.

1.3 Purpose of the study

The purpose of the study is first of all to analyze how J.F. Oberlin University as a private institution is responding to environmental changes in its current access policy. How is access policy being developed in a specific environment, suburb area of Tokyo? How is the admission office coordinating and achieving the admission process in order to attract enough students and the best ones possible?

In doing a case study of one institution the aim is not to generalize and come to conclusions that can be applied to all the population. On the contrary, the purpose is to contribute to the deep understanding of a specific problem Japanese institutions are facing and, in this sense, probably to turn it into a useful analysis instrument for this institution and others in similar environment and hierarchical status.

In order to improve the selection process in the current shift of pressure: from students (in order to be admitted in the higher prestige institution they need to pass difficult exams) to the tough competition among higher education institutions (to attract enough student in order to increase their prestige and to survive)

The Ministry of Education, viewing popularization of higher education positively, envisages the higher education system where diversified institutions competitively, and independently, improve their quality and responsiveness to the ever-growing social expectation. The Final Report on the Future Vision for Higher Education after the Fiscal 2000 (The University Council Report)

1.4 Significance of the study

Access in higher education is a complex topic which is considered by many governments both in developed and in developing countries. Access policies are usually considered from the state regulation to the institution implementation. In the case of Japan, in the last 30 years the national education reforms have covered many of the critical points: massification (1970's), internationalization (1980's), privatization (1990's), quality (2000's) and still there are many things to deal with.

Access is a topic which treated requires a complex net. It is connected to compulsory education, high school organization, society demands, economic affairs, student features and even traditional and cultural heritage. The strong traditional government control over the public system, which is on the top of the hierarchical education system and always works as a reference point, used to develop policies oriented to deal with public needs. Nevertheless, when national and local government realized the magnificence of the higher education field and the increase power of the private sector in the last 20 years, policy makers have been aware about the private sector features and needs. Yet, and related with the specific topic of access in private higher education institutions, the fact of the wide

variation of institutions and the significant freedom from the state control makes the private sector difficult to categorize. As a consequence, literature cannot focus on private institutions access policy as individual cases. This master thesis is focusing on institutional implementation, trying to shed some light on how J.F. Oberlin University is working and hopefully it may provide some practical and conceptual insights to other institutions facing a similar situation.

1.5 Background of the study

Japan has been well served by its education system. Japanese primary and secondary education displayed very good performance according OECD in 2000 (PISA 2000). However in the following years 2003 Japan was not good enough to maintain the high level (Oba, 2005). In the field of higher education several weaknesses have increasingly come and become an important preoccupation. There has been an extensive debate and numerous reforms to design a new educational system more effective in meeting national needs (Schoppa, 1991 in Hayes, 1997). Nevertheless, those efforts to promote the educational reform have not been successful enough (Schoppa, 1991:251). The increase in competition among students first and then institutions, the institutional prestige for future success, the social and cultural diversity of students and their decreasing compromise with national issues demand a steady policy reform and fixed institution implementation.

Education in Japan, like that in all countries, must be continually responsive to society's changing tastes and needs. However, whether Japanese education possesses the kind of adaptability and initiative necessary to confront the evolving demands made of it is uncertain (Hayes, 1997:308).

1.6 Definition of terms

Access

Access is considered as the complete set of requirements that must be met in the process which allows students to continue their education in the tertiary level.

Access to higher education is a goal which can produce positive outcomes both for the individual concerned and for wider society (Forsyth, 2000:1).

Furthermore, depending the number of students who apply to tertiary education the attitudes to access could be classified by three types: Elite (0-15%) a privilege of birth or talent or both, Mass (15-50%) a right for those with certain qualifications or Universal (over 50%) an obligation for middle and upper classes. Each system develops different procedures and principles to select student (Trow, 2005). The ways they choose, the aims they pursuit and the conditions they face will define the most convenience policy access.

Admission

University admission procedures show a tendency toward attempting to select appropriately and accurately from a large base of those who have abilities and aptitudes and a social and cultural capital in the line with higher education exigencies. In order to develop appropriate admission procedures institutions must know educational content and the level of high schools. Institutions have the freedom to design their system in accordance with their beliefs and values. However they have to be fair with all the candidates carrying out a clear selection process. Orientation is giving during the transition period from secondary school to college to aim appropriate advice to incoming students.

Entrance examination

Entrance examination process has changed. The new trend forces institutions to consider the background of the students and opens their admission process to a flexible and individual process. The limitation of exclusivity of writing exam has been denied.

Selection of university entrants (Harman, 1994:313):

(1) Selection made only on the basis of the results of scholastic examinations conducted by individual universities cannot provide highly valid results.

(2) The comprehensive use of scholastic examinations conducted by individual universities, tests administered by the Educational Test Research Institute and reports from upper secondary schools can select students whose scholastic attainment during their university career is much better than any of these individually.

(3) Scholastic achievements during the upper secondary school period as reported by these schools had a higher validity than the scholastic entrance examinations conducted by each university.

1.7 Outline of the thesis

This thesis is composed of seven chapters. It begins with *Chapter 1- Introduction*, which already introduced the research problem and questions and the purpose and motivation of the study.

Chapter 2- Methodology, provides a justification of the strategy used. How the case study procedure is considered the most convenient for the research. Afterwards the data collection process is presented.

Chapter 3- Literature review, theoretical and conceptual framework, provides the conceptual and theoretical view of the agents involved in the higher education process reform, and then sets up the Japanese national environment.

Chapter 4- Japanese Private Institutions, presents a view of how private institutions in Japan operate. Afterward how their admission process has been adapted to the current situation.

Chapter 5- J.F. Oberlin University, Admission Process, presents the institution: origin, structures, location, degrees... and explains in detail the admission process implemented.

Chapter 6- Analysis Data, presents the analysis of the interviews and the observational process achieved during the field work. It explores the implementation process carried out by the admission office and the institutional policy commands.

Chapter 7- Conclusion, presents the result based on the research question. It links the data gathered with the experience and observed behavior. Also, it presents suggestion for future improvement.

2 Methodologies

The methodology chapter aims to explore the methodological options made along the study. It presents a deductive approach. The process initiates from the policy reforms, as a general framework, then goes narrow to the implementation in private universities using a case study method. J.F. Oberlin University was the institution selected for the case study. Subsequently an argumentation about the case study approach as the research strategy is presented. Into this section the relevant points considered to select this university are shown. In the last point the criteria for the selection of the instruments to collect data are exposed.

2.1 Introduction

The aim is to contribute to understand the complex system of private institutions admission process in face of social and cultural pressures (Firestone, 1993 in Perry, 1998-790).

To achieve this purpose, a holistic analysis was developed based on a qualitative research on multiples aspects of the setting under study to gather a broad and complete portrait of the social, political and academic influences on the topic chosen. The researcher analyzed qualitative data to understand how institutional access policy can be interpreted as a management tool. By holistic approach is meant that the whole is interpreted as a complex system richer than the sum of its parts.

To analyze the referred research problem, a qualitative approach was elected as the most appropriate. It was developed based on documental analysis and interviews. First policies changes were analyzed and scrutinized to set up the framework. Secondly interviews with key note speakers at the institutional level such as: President, Vice-president, Dean of Performing and Visual Arts College and Head of the Admission office, were carried out to gather a specific and deep knowledge of the case study.

This research is based on a deductive and inductive approach sustained in qualitative methodology developed by the case study of J.F. Oberlin University.

Analysis of policy reform was developed to give a deductive point of view in the beginning of the thesis. It has been used to set up the theoretical and conceptual framework then the key concepts have been analyzed through an inductive approach as the core of the thesis. The period defined in the process could be identified with the third reform in Japanese education (1980 until nowadays). The boundaries between the phenomenon of the policy reform and the specific context in J.F. Oberlin University have been analyzed (Yin in Perry, 1998).

Due to the combination of deductive and inductive theories a realistic approach is presented. It works for the sake of outcomes and the pragmatism of the research (Emory and Cooper in Perry 1998:787).

The deductive testing has been based on secondary data such as policy documents, university statements, articles. Thus, all this information has been referenced to organize and understand the following stage. On the other hand inductive theory has been used to build up phenomenological paradigm supporting an empirical approach aiming at revealing the singularities and let the researcher observe the fieldwork.

2.2 Research strategy

It is well known that research methods have advantages and disadvantages and the case study is no exception. Nevertheless the case study approach emerges as the most appropriate for this analysis considering the field, aim, environment and researcher features.

A case study allows researchers to be emotionally involved and learn action-related analysis of reality, dealing with complex situations. Since the aim of this research project was too deeply analyze a complex issue such as: How changes in higher education environment affect private institutions access policies? It emerged as the best for this research project.

Different researchers as, for instance, Campbell has shown that case studies have their own rigor, different from the quantitative one, but nevertheless feasible (Flyvbjerg, 2006). The great advantage of the case study is that it can be close-in to the real life and test

different views straight in relation to the topic. Since J.F. Oberlin University is set in a specific place with defining values and beliefs it brings the case worthy to study.

Several disadvantages have been associated with case study methodology. General and theoretical knowledge is more valuable than concrete and practical. Nevertheless, the need of context dependence and the closeness to the real life helps to develop the nuanced view of reality (context dependence), that cannot be meaningfully understanding from the rule governed acts (context-independence), and then increases the researcher's experience and understanding. However there is the trend about the lack of legitimacy to be able to generalize on the basis of individual case, to defeat this wrong idea which is not constructive and too broad, it needs to consider the importance of choosing the right case and the process to select it (Flyvbjerg, 2006:221).

"More discoveries have arisen from intense observation than from statistics applied to large groups" (Flyvbjerg, 2006:226).

This does not mean that the case study is always the right method and others are not appropriate. What it is really important is that the election of the method should clearly depend on the problem under study and its circumstances.

One can often generalize on the basis of a single case, and the case study may be central to scientific development via generalization as supplement or alternative to other methods. But formal generalization is overvalued as a source of scientific development, whereas "the force of example" is underestimated (Flyvbjerg, 2006:230).

To help the generalization of the case study it can be increased by the strategic selection of the case. When one aim is to get the greatest possible amount of information on a given topic, an average representative case or random one could not be the best. Atypical or extreme cases often expose extra information because they turn on more actors and more mechanics in the field of study. In the case of J.F. Oberlin University some distinctions could be presented: its strong international orientation, its successful trail in the last difficult years where Oberlin managed to keep the number of student applications and still being quite selective, its high ambitions to keep growing with the inauguration of new departments could be some of them.

Nevertheless summarizing and developing general propositions from a case study is difficult, in both cases process and outcomes. However and going a little further analyzing

the properties of the reality of the case studied, not always is needed or demanded to summarize and generalize the case. Good studies could be read as narratives in their entirety (Flyvbjerg, 2006:241). Being a common problem to deal with deep enough knowledge about the issue, the case study gives us the perfect method to understand, in a deep way the research problem without the need to go further.

In order to refute the disadvantages already mentioned, these are the main positive features of this university choice:

- The institution is considered on medium-high level between private institutions hierarchy rank and size (Prof. Tachi interview) the policy and performance during the last years are worthy to analyse.

- The institution has ambitious goals for medium and long term and they are being achieved successfully until now. Their admission procedures are innovating and attending the social changes in order to guarantee the best students possible. J.F. Oberlin University realized how important the research problem is.

- It is located in Tokyo, where the competition for students is higher than in other places. In addition, location in Tokyo area is considered as an extremely important factor to attract student from others cities.

- Agreement with overseas institutions. The internationalization action of J.F. Oberlin University can be seen as an example of how they are facing the lack of local students attracting international ones therefore improving its international and national prestige

- Sport advantage in Senior high School and the use of media. The institution invests on promotion and uses the condition as a “conglomerate” institution. Something worthy to point out is the successful baseball team in Junior High School who won the National league in 2006 and gave good status to the Institution.

The idea of conglomeration institution means that institutions encompass all the education levels in order to assure students from the lower levels. It lets students belong to the same institution from the lower levels (kinder garden, primary education) until the end of their education career. In Japan it could be considered as new idea due to the previous

practices where it was common for students to shift from one institution to other, once they finish each step, depending on their academic skills and the mock range distribution.

As last disadvantage, the case study method is questioned because of the tendency of personal influence toward verification by the researcher's preconceived notions.

"The case study contains no greater bias toward verification of the researcher's preconceived notions than other methods of inquiry. On the contrary, experience indicates that the case study contains a greater bias toward falsification of preconceived notions than toward verification" (Flyvbjerg, 2006:237)

Falsification is one of the most rigorous test to which a scientific proposition can be subjective. When one observation does not fit with the proposition it is often not considered or must be either revised or rejected. That means when some or a few observations which are different and do not follow the hypotheses are found then is when the case study can be strong to study them deeply, attending to new and different parameters probably changing the direction of the research or also opening a new one. This method helps to make sure that the exceptions, uniqueness and different cases could be considered in their deep analysis as an important part of the scientific community. In the case of J.F. Oberlin University the internationalization orientation, its location in Tokyo area and its religious value and its specific admission policy makes it different and unique enough in order to analysis it.

Flyvbjerg (2006) pointed out the idea to consider the case study as something open instead of close or reduced. Writing up a case study from the role of narrator, lets us tell the history in a diversity way and allowing it to swell from different sides. This master thesis should really attend this idea due to in this topic many different influences affect to the global issue: Japanese culture, present Japanese environment and the strong heritage, social and economic affairs; decreasing population, competition among students and institutions.

2.3 Data collection

2.3.1 Document analysis

Document analysis was considered an extremely rich source of data in connection to this study. Through the carefully and critical review of documents, brochures and annual

reports significant data was gathered related with two affairs. First, at national policy level it showed how the policy reforms in Japanese higher education was taking shape and how different agents were involved struggling with different goals. Secondly the information gathering was extremely useful to understand the design and implementation process by private institutions and more specific by J.F. Oberlin University case. That information provided data that would not be possible to be directly collected. Moreover it provided the researcher with an optimum background to face the interviews. Documentary review was an important tool to shed light on the gap between the policy design and the implementation carried out by the institution. The information was professionally handled aiming to present it directly and plainly. Documents were not only appreciated by the source of knowledge they brought to this gathering process through researching and reading a highly motivation (Patton, 2002:294). The constant demand of critical analysis and the search of new data were fruitful.

2.3.2 Semi-structured interview

Interviews were planned to be semi-structured, trying to adapt it to the context. The cultural differences were an important matter to deal with. The excellent predisposition of all the interviewees helped to face some of the misunderstanding based on the western point of view of the research, difficulties with the language, lack of experience about the Japanese society and in some cases misunderstanding of the questions themselves. One of the structure features was the fact to use the same interview always when possible, when interviewees work at the same level or specific field: interview I was used for policy makers President and Vice-president and interview II for the deans of each college in order to analysis and compare how a common policy is implemented from different perspectives. Related with the implementation of the policy the head of the admission center was interviewed with interview III. The primary source for this thesis was based on the interviewee's life-world. The aim was to understand the phenomenon (increase pressure in the institutions in the admission process) from all the agents involved at the institutional level. The descriptive and specific orientation that interviews took about certain themes and trying to avoid presuppositions and misunderstanding from the interviewer side made the interviews take a semi-structure orientation (Kvale, 1983:174).

Individual interviews were recorded as an instrument of my primary sources of data. There were three different groups of questions: the first one was about policy reform concerning access policy, the second and third questions were based on the J.F. Oberlin admission process implementation. All the interviews done were achieved successfully moreover no specific problems could be mentioned in the interviews. However it is important to say that three of the four deans that were planning to be interviewed did not have time to receive me. At the time I was dealing with the interviews it was the beginning of the academic year and professors were really busy. In the case of Management and Business College the dean just took his position the same month of the interview. The chances to meet me were really uncertain. It is important as well to mention the great effort that the interviewee did to receive me from the dean of Performance and Visual Arts to the president. The interviews themselves were conducted without any peculiarity. These similarities in the process and the freedom of the interviewees to answer gave a wide range of interesting information.

The affinity between interviewees and interviewer emerged as an important variable in the effectiveness of the interview. The freedom again by both part, the mutual interest on the field and the chance share experience from individuals with significant different experiences made the process itself rich and useful assuring, by this way, the validity and reliability (McDaniel, 1994:599).

3 Literature review, theoretical and conceptual framework

In this chapter it is intended to analyse policy reforms in Japanese higher education with an especial emphasize in access policies in the last 30 years. Firstly and as an introduction discussion the international trends will be presented focused on the emergence of the new agents who impose changes on the system to, which institution needs to adapt and that may also have some influence over to their admission policies (Maassen & Cloete, 2006). The balance between all forces involved would increase the outcomes of higher education. Changes in system and institutional environment (Jackson, 2004; Ogawa, 2002 and Yonazawa, 2003) present many difficulties and challenges that both governments and institutional agents must lead with. Among these changes the tendencies to introduce market and privatization in higher education system can be assumed as one of the most influent. The analysis of the admission process in private universities can only be understand in these environment of change based in deregulation and privatization in the higher education field.

3.1 Policy reform in Higher Education

Access in higher education is highly concerned with many others aspects of the society. Parents, firstly and students themselves later, make their choice based on distinct factors, using, among them, the rational idea of maximizing their money, time and effort invested in education. Using economic perspective governments increasingly look at higher education mainly as a way through which they intend to accomplish the quantitative and qualitative needs of work force for country economic development. At the same time industry has its own demands of graduated in order to sustain the private market, in a more competitive approach. In this context higher education institutions have to correspond to demands from different agents and at the same time have to define themselves keeping their traditional belief and values. Traditionally, education used to be considered as a public good and governed by the state nevertheless the private side, linked with the idea of

private good, has been getting more importance in many education systems all around the world.

Public and private institutions seem to have different roles in higher education systems. Public seem to be more concerned with bringing more equity to the system. On the other hand, this value does not seem to be a concern for private system since each individual has to pay expensive tuition fees and the equity of tertiary education can be more restricted. In opening the system to market and private universities competition between institutions have increased. However from kindergarten to higher education, institutions have their own beliefs and values, the kind of education they teach and other features produce important differences between each of them. Matters such as religion, economy, location, tradition or preferences influence to the choice of institution by the students (Professor Tachi). Prestigious institutions bring higher education level, self-identity and confidence, contacts and then a better present and future. These factors mark the important decision where students should attend. Politicians have to deal with national educational policies and practices, looking to produce and conduct the current reforms in order to meet the educational, cultural and economic needs of society. Traditionally the state had the role to control and design higher education (Fujita 1999:37). However, in our days, state control is more restricted. The state is expected to supervise and collaborate in the higher education developments as all the other agents involved.

Even within the general framework one has to remember that higher education has a long history and it has taken different shapes in different countries. The social context should play an important role in the policy reform process. It is needed to consider it in order to understand how government policies have faced educational development and how they are doing now under more and more complex environment. Each new agent involved looks for his benefits by influencing the current situation.

(...) interdependent global economy is forefront concern of national policy-makers. In Japan, and perhaps in other regions of the world, the economic optimism of the 1970s has been replaced by a general recession lately. National educational policies and practices have been challenged, if not changed, by these fundamental transformations (Fujita 1999:37).

3.2 Agents in policy reform

The global reform emergent at the end of 1980's brought with it a "new world order", within which a new institutional environment was settled for socio-economic and political changes took places. That had considerable effects in all sectors of the society, and especially in higher education, all over the 1990's. The idea of globalization was represented by the new growth of different organizations³ all around the world bringing dramatically important changes in an indirect way to the higher education field. It allowed institutions to become part of the national development policies in countries all over the world (Maassen and Cloete, 2006:7).

The improvement and powerful status of the institutions brought a new dilemma in the relationship between state and society. Olsen (2000) announced that this relationship has become problematic. Three issues can be mentioned as fundamental: first, the decreasing public support to tertiary education. Second, the widespread situation of insufficient quality, effectiveness, efficiency and responsibility by higher education institutions and third, the lack of intellectual capacity produce by the university and which society is demanding. The re-interpretation that took place produced a more competitive orientation forward the own benefit of each a gents. The institutions autonomy⁴ was one of the main points where competences, responsibilities, social and political relationships were laying. It could not be understood as a lack of accountability from government's side then they started to acting as a "watchdog" and encourage external evaluations of higher education as measurable supervision.

3.2.1 State

What is the role of the states in the new models of relationship to steer the emerging demands of the higher education system?

³ EU, World Bank, Unesco, OECD

⁴ There should be external agencies to control universities and colleges, with a formal procedure of evaluation, institutions should face accountability in their decision, they should be steered by market forces and not by governmental or state mechanisms, professional leaders should sustain the administration and management tasks instead of by academic, and institutions should consider the relationship with industries in regional and global trade agreements (Olsen, 2000 in Maassen & Cloete, 2006-9)

Since the early XIX century in Europe and in its colonies, governments have taken the control, which means they took the responsibility of the public interest in higher education. Governments were the creators and owners of the institutions and they never worried to address the relationship with the social expectations. However in the United States (US) reform 1980 (point of reference to Japanese government decision makers) broadly speaking national governance model trend had been implemented to promote a market-type of interaction between higher education and society, even when each state had their own policies. Institutions were quiet autonomous and the public ones always had some economic support from the central government with a regulatory role not very restrictive. In Europe a substitution of a model of national planning and control by a model of state supervision started to take place (Van Vught 1997).

At the end of 1990's Clark (Maassen & Cloete, 2006:10) denounced that demands for higher education were increasing its power, size and economic significance while state support, financial legally and politically, were decreasing. The imbalance between community demands and institutional capacity was assumed as a global phenomenon. Nevertheless different approaches can be observed in Japanese Higher Education, the Continental European, the British and in the US models were the main ones.

Something common for all different steering models during 1950 to 1970 was the political "marketability" where it could be modeled by policies and then appropriate implementations. However the problem was the gap between political programmers and the implementation of public sectors due to their consolidated autonomy in higher education field. The implementation of the political ideas through different methods hardly works efficiently. Looking at the relationship between policy intention and policy outcomes push the system directly toward tension relationship between educational and economics agendas. Education may attempt to introduce a quality assessment approach based on peer review steering among other by academic values while the economics one focus on efficiency through competition and quality of the higher education in the labor market demands. The complexity of the field with new agents and strong demands from different sectors; society, industry... brought more tension to national and international education agendas.

3.2.2 Institution

Institutions, in this master thesis, have been considered as the core point and also as an inflexion point meeting the policy decision coming from the top and the daily life of students, professors and society coming from the bottom. Furthermore, in the contemporary university it is required to look at the academic and administrative organization structure. Institutions have the administrative side with employees (different staff) and customs that bring the "professional" administrative features to the academic side. Professors, with two main labor tasks such as teaching and research and students brought to the institutions academic features. It makes higher education institutions special and different from any other kind of organization. All in all higher education institutions have interaction with actors in external and internal policy processes. The specific characteristics of the academic side bring particular difficulties to initiate and steer organizational change from outside. It does not mean that this is not a powerful influence by external forces at all, but how it influences on time, direction and effects can be impossible to control and difficult to predict. In the last decade traditional features and the academic control has been defeated by the need for new sources of incomes and massification processes. The increased complexity of the internal and external procedures and demands has led to the professionalization of the administration so that institutions could be able to deal with them. This increasing importance and power of the administrative profession is challenging the traditional dominance of the academics.

The expansion of institutional management changes the steering and governance process of national policy agenda. It gave more autonomy and responsibility to the institutions to compete at national and international level introducing efficiency measures (Maassen & Cloete 2006-15:16).

3.2.3 Society

Social demands to higher education have been intensified, education is more pushed to take into account social, financial stakeholders' interests. After World War II the demands on higher education have been increased dramatically and also they have been changed and have been developing new needs in the last decades continuously. Society demands not

only an increase in access and participation, but also concerns for whom are taking these new places. Higher education is being a common requirement to fulfill the aspiration in the labor market and society. More services and higher quality in higher education sector are being demanded. However, the state has decreased the public investment in the field and opened up new ways of funding that are hardly ever designed for the direct benefit of the students. This clearly pushes to make closer the relationship between institutions and market and industry, where the state has the role of a "watchdog" and the students and academic oligarchy struggle to increase its presence and defend its wide variety of functions. Higher education is trying to respond to the social and economic demands but the complexity of the system and the heritage limitation of the institutions in Japanese case makes the answer difficult to find.

The growing importance of society in the Clark analytic triangle (1998) is supported by the theoretical idea of the "corporate-pluralist model" (Olsen, 1998 in Maassen and Cloete, 2006:13).

The Corporate-pluralistic model (Olsen, 1998 in Maassen and Cloete, 2006:13) defends that; there is no longer a unique actor, state, who has the monopoly and control of the higher education sector. Instead it has to take into account other challenges and valid agents of authority and control. Higher education is expected to present a wide variety of interests and commitments of different involved social groups in the sector such as industry and business, regional development, student unions, staff unions and trade unions, just to mention a few. The state in the new environment represents only one more actor. Stakeholders' collaboration is expected to be present in the development of the decision process in the tertiary education. In policy-making process where parliamentary power has been reduced and where the decision making consists on a corporate network of public boards, councils and commissions those new stakeholders are working aside looking for their own interests (Maassen & Cloete, 2006:14).

3.3 Japanese Higher Education

3.3.1 Introduction

The modern Japanese higher education system began in the late 19th century when Tokyo Imperial University was found in 1887. Then other imperial universities were established in the major cities such as Kyoto, Hokkaido, Osaka. Apart from those universities a few local and private institutions were founded. The second reform took place after the World War II (WW). In 1949 new institutions were opened as national universities. At this point all the public universities were considered equal in terms of legal status. However former imperial universities keep the top positions with significant advantages in prestige, staffing, facilities, budget allocation and management ability.

Japanese universities started the process of their "third wave" reform in 1980-90s. It covered fundamental and broad areas from primary school to higher education. Higher education policy dealt with quality of undergraduate education, expansion of graduate education and introduction of evaluation system.

The Japanese higher education sector is characterized by its dual structure that includes a limited public sector controlled by national and local governments and a very large market-driven private sector. There are three types of university-level institutions, 87 national universities, controlled by the Ministry of Education; 72 public universities run by local or regional governments and 596 private universities. In addition there are also 525 junior colleges (of which most are private) and 63 technical colleges. According to Ministry of Education statistics, the higher education system embraces over 4 million students (72.9 percent of the relevant age cohort in 2003). In 2003, there were 2,803,980 students in universities, and 250,062 in junior colleges (Monbusho, 2003).

The entrance examination system is a matter which concerns all the students in the "middle point" of their academic carriers. It is a requirement that everyone needs to take in order to continue his/her studies in higher education. The entrance examination and evaluation system are becoming popular social issues since they are visible to society (Ogawa, 2002:85).

Japan as a nation has experimented important changes. From 1960s educational policy had been focused on increasing human resources development in the manufacturing sector. Then by 1980s this stage began to reach its limits due to the high and good health of Japanese economy. It brought to Japan a sense of indifference to the rest of the world and there was the belief that working hard and being disciplinary would bring the success. Nevertheless in 1990's a decade of economic recession came, with national and international consequences. There are still some Asian countries which have not recovered

from recession. Japanese population was losing confidence in their social and economic system, culture and traditions. Nowadays the motivation for students to study and work hard is missed, academics have pointed out that there is a feeling deterioration of academic achievement among school and university students (Yonezawa, 2003:146).

Arimoto (Maassen & Cloete, 2006:25) exposed, since Japanese higher education system grew dramatically after the World War II, it produced a post-massification system in Japan (more than 50% of the students once they finished high school were enrolled in tertiary education), where a large private sector was combined with the strong public one. The post-massification process was achieved in quantitative growth without focusing in the necessarily qualitative adaptation by private institutions (Arimoto, 1997:209). The public system, mainly through the National Universities, kept the quality of academic work limiting its growth whereas the private sector, without firm control about their instruction level, absorbed the increase number of students expanding it quickly. The significant gap between these two kinds of institutions and the influence of ideas such as internationalization demanded the need of an effective reform on the education system. Different questions have been addressed in the public discussion about Japanese higher education in nowadays namely: individualize instruction, enhance thinking skills, creativity and autonomy, reduce the stress associate with entrance examination, internationalization and expand lifelong learning.

To answer those questions the first Prime Minister Nakasone (1980-1984) completed a reform aiming to a decentralization idea in Japanese university. Social needs were changing fast because aging society, decreasing of population furthermore cultural changes such as different values for the new generations, internationalization and globalization was taking place. In order to deal with those changes different commitments were delivered and new agents were involved.

Society became more demanding (competition, massification, quality) moreover government who really had been focused on supporting compulsory education started to reduce funding to higher education. New stakeholders from the society and industry took an active role in the process. Institutions also changed and offered different approach: society/institutions or state/institution.

While the first one referred to the private dimension of the university, which competed for the best students, national and international prestige and so on. The second, state/institution remained the public dimension, which had to fulfill the social demands and equity.

However, another group to be considered was the students, although when their power had been quite limited because power had always been setting on the state as a funder and/or in others systems on the academic oligarchy. Now students have gained more presence through student association and student trade unions with changes in the curriculum development and design (Maassen and Cloete, 2006:13).

The University Council came up with another reform in 1998. Through those answers they look for making the institutions competent enough to reach an international standard for the 21st century. Undergraduate institutions claimed to be graduate ones pushing them up into the competition era. Moreover new fields of knowledge were developed creating the need for institutions to cope with new curriculums and plans. These reforms made the universities become more loosely couple system. It demanded to the institutions to cope with the reform in an active attitude and at the same time with the aim to create university values and culture. Universities were trying to look for uniqueness and high performances to succeed in the new competition era (Ogawa, 2002: 85).

In 2000 the National Commission on Education Reform under Obuchi's⁵ Cabinet was established to restructure the system. During 1980s and 1990s a great impetus to educational policy for globalization was taken. Most of Japanese families felt the pressure of growing in a global market. Japanese were only worry about their domestic educational competition, which a target to reach the best higher education institution possible in order to assure a successful life. They never felt any incentive or motivation to study or work abroad. The economic crisis and fast develop of the society made Japanese society face a "identity crisis".

The reaction of MEXT (Minister of Education) after Obuchi commission' report was rapid. In 2001 the Prime Minister of Education intents was the enhancement of elite

⁵ Obuchi: Primer Minister of Japan from July 30, 1998 to April 5, 2000

education and the reduction of curriculum content simultaneously beside that a strong effort was done in order to recover the trust on Japanese education. Expansion of enrolment meant somehow that students with lower skills were being recruited. A request for national and international recognition under the flag of (a few) elite universities was expand. The elitist aspect of higher education to differentiate institutions was based on prestige. Nevertheless society keeps demanding a relaxation of examination hell. A strong quarrel between opposite interest was set.

Continuous changes in the curriculum content and (reducing of the amount of stipulated theoretical content) new initiatives to encourage the creativity and individualistic atmosphere in compulsory education has taken place to cool down the competition in the entrance examination process. However, once again social factors took place with the dramatically decreasing of high school graduate students plus a wide variety of skill and background. In one of the largest higher education systems in the world, the number of university students and the market of higher education changed from over-demand to over-supply. Mori (2002) announced that by 2009 all the students willing to access higher education will find a place nevertheless it does not mean they will be accepted in their first or second choice. In addition, university teachers have pointed out that the fall of the academic achievement among students is an important matter for worldwide competitiveness (Yonezawa, 2003:150).

In the course of these changes, policy implementation did not affect equally to both kind of institutions (public and private). The competition for access to the high prestigious university (Public National) is still really tough for students whereas in private, medium and low ranking institutions, there is an increased effort of the institutions to attract students, using creativeness and variety of methodology policies that the Minister of Education allowed where students find more opportunities and facilities. The direct competition between same level hierarchical institutions and the effort to improve their prestige to the next step in the educational ranking still now is really demanding.

In 2001 with Koizumi Cabinet a new wave in the reform took place. Education reform became more oriented to economical and industrial policies. Privatization of the public sector was in his targets. Education now is expecting to efficiently steering in a

competitive environment. With the implementation of Toyama's⁶ Plan initiatives are officially in the hands of the institutions. Universities are under the pressure to budgetary their expenditures. They are more than ever forced to compete for funding (Yonezawa, 2003:153).

3.3.2 Motivation for the reform

The following quote could summarize the situation of Japanese education before the Nakasone's reform started (1980-1984).

"(...) harshly criticized institutions of higher education, stating that 'university education lacks individuality, and little research being done in Japan has achieved international recognition...Universities are largely closed rigid systems, insufficiently responsive to the needs of the society and the international community' (Foreign Press Center 1995, 48 in Doyon, 2001:453).

Besides these conditions, students were under tremendous stress to aspire to enter high prestige universities. The fact to be graduated by one of those institutions assures students to be selective by national government and important business corporation. The most prestigious the institutions is, the better jobs its students could expect after their graduations. As a result of this fact, public university admission was based on entrance examination scores. Each university had its own examination process looking to select the best students in the fairest way. The key point in this process related with access was that those exams were exclusively based on written tests where students showed solely their memory skills. Thus, in order to succeed in that final exam, the competition started when students applied to high school (even before) as the more suitable way to prepare for the challenge of entering in the desired institution. The resulting level of stress was widely considered excessive and dysfunctional. To go deeper in the understanding of the demanding process is must be mentioned the process called "the race" where the concepts of "juku" "yobiko" and "runin" take place, in order to prepare for the "examination hell". A brief description of each is relevant to the analyses and is presented below:

Juku: "supplemental school" referees to institutions where students attend after the compulsory education, in the late afternoon or early in the evening even sometimes on

⁶ Toyama: Minister of Education in Koizumi Cabinet

Saturdays. The objective is to provide the skills and knowledge requires passing the examination process for the next education level. In 1985, 45% of the entire lower secondary school students attend *jukus* (MESC, 1989b, 28). The data for upper secondary education is not provided but it is estimated higher than 50%. In consequences students have not opportunities to develop other activities, as Tokutake mentioned:

"students at the secondary level can scarcely ever live the kind of life that an adolescent should be able to enjoy" (Tokutake, 1988, 47 in Jackson, 2004:14).

Yobiko: "full-time cram school" once students are graduated from higher school and they did not gain access on the institution chosen, they spend one or two years preparing for the next entrance examination. In 1985, 57% of the students enrolled at the most prestigious public universities had spent at least one year on *yobiko* (Tsukada, 1988:286).

Ronin: *ronin* status is an extreme manifestation of examination hell. Students who attend *yobiko* are socially recognized as *ronin*. The meaning of the word in Japanese refers to "master less samurai" at this time they belong neither schools nor universities. The average of students to entering college with *ronin* experience is 30% and higher in prestige institutions with 60% (Ono, 2007:271).

"Examination hell" has been considered a fact of life and an institutional process in Japanese society (Ono, 2007). Admission to Japanese system higher education or earlier stages demands a process to go forward compulsory education level which is based on a competitive selection by entrance exams. They are administered by the institution itself. In the last decades government regulations have increased its awareness on the kind of requirements. Students in order to be able to gather more chances to access in the selected and prestigious institutions attend cram school, *jukus* and *yobiko*. In Japan, there was not any tradition to consider extracurricular activities or other skills to help in the selection process unlike some western countries. That was why the enormous pressure for Japanese students who only had the score of those "memorizing" exams as the way to be accepted. This process has shown an excessive dependence on formal education and strong emphasis on educational background. Nowadays society's opinion is widely against this procedure. It is important to say that education policy has been working to implement new admission procedures for the last two decades (Jackson, 2004:14).

Another factor that has to be mentioned in order to justify the need of the reform is the political power shift that Japan has been experienced in the last decades. The successful rises of the progressive party over the traditionalist one has influenced on the education system. Parents and teachers are now more active in education matters and look forward the shift to effective education, customized to the individual character of each student. A progressive belief is that development of attitudes, values and habits is needed in the academic life in order to reduce students' behavior problems and better prepare citizens for successful lives.

The world community is another incentive of the needed Japanese reform. Whilst the internationalization trend is coming up all around the world, Japanese successful economics at the 1970 and 1980 did not make them consider or be aware of these trends and prepare citizens for the 21st century. They have been criticized for not being good world citizens. They have considered these criticisms unfair however they recognize the need to be an active part of the world community. This sentence can briefly sum up the context

"a great effort into preparing its youth for their roles as citizens, it now intends to put effort into preparing its youth to be members of the world community"
(Jackson, 2004:6).

In order to deal with the global competition in the 21st century and considering both the rapid aging society and the declining birth rate, the policy reform movement emerged more economic centered, more market sensitive and more influenced by the government shift to deregulation. The market trend had enormous consequences in any higher education system. This market educational policy came directly from globalization practices, which represented an increase of managerialism, accountability and privatization on universities' agenda all around the world (Jackson, 2004:7).

3.3.3 Implementation of the reform

After many years discussing about education reform it should take place, in 1984 the Prime Minister Nakasone, convened the National Council of Education Reform (NCER) with the aim to come up with effective recommendation changes. Mr. Nakasone said:

Today we are facing dramatic changes in our circumstances, both domestic and overseas, as well as great changes in the times. I am convinced that the time has come to develop new policies for implementing the necessary reforms in political, economic, social, educational, cultural and others...it is necessary for us, I believe, to reform our educational system with a long-term perspective and make this a responsibility of the entire Government...

It is my belief that educational reform should aim to preserve and further develop the traditional Japanese culture which we have inherited and to cultivate in children lofty ideals, sound physical strength, well-balanced personalities and creative power, as well as such moral and behavioral standards as are universally accepted in human society, so that these future Japanese citizens may be able to contribute to the international community with a Japanese consciousness...

Finally I should like to add that educational reform involves more than the reform of education alone. It will inevitably lead to reform of Japanese society itself. Bearing this in mind, I should like to ask you ... to deliberate on educational reform so as to respond to the expectations of all segments of our population and take into account their opinions to the greatest extent possible (Leestrna, August, George, & Peak, 1987, p. 64 in Jackson, 2004:6)

The Central Council of Education, once it got the NCER's report, arranged a meeting at national level with prefectural⁷, municipal and local board of education to present the goals of the reform and a plan for achieving them. After eight theoretical goals were given (Ishizaka, 1992: 4-5) the following specific recommendations were presented:

- Control of government had to be reduced, due to the expensive cost of education, in the massification process.
- Giving more power to prefectural and municipal government. They will assume more responsibilities (deregulation).
- Looking for more flexibility and individualization, attending to the new kind of students.
- More flexible criteria were used for admission entrance examination. There is a wide variety in the admission process. General administration was looking forward to give more freedom to the university to set up the kind of process they consider more convenient. Moreover students would have the chance to choose which way gives them more guaranties. In 1990 the National Central University Entrance Examination was built up.

⁷ Prefecture: Japanese system to divide their national territory, the federal states in the USA or the Autonomous Communities in Spain could mean the same

Central Council of Education was trying to restructure higher education towards the national development. The report considered individualization and diversification to be the start point for all the reform (Reiko, 2001:280).

The process demanded an intelligent-oriented society, based on the reform in undergraduate level where the emphasis in liberal arts took place. While for the graduate programs advanced and diversified orientation was established. Once the society started to play a more active role, topics such as access and quality were and are the most popular. Institutions were dealing with students with a wide range of backgrounds. Access, curriculum, evaluation had to be adapted to the new “customers”. More flexibility and diversity was required from the institutions to follow up the reform. The increase of autonomy was linked with the implementation of developing the professional administrative structure that universities needed in order to answer the social demands (Reiko, 2001:280).

In the process of implementation, it is important to analyze the most relevant hurdles and alliances that the process found:

The university admission process is considered as one of the hurdles to achieve the reform’s objectives, nevertheless there were more: traditional values, educators’ lack of experience in the new pedagogy and Japan teachers’ unions which hinder the process.

The decentralized governance of the universities and their autonomy to decide about the university entrance examination present an annoy hurdle. Originally the system was copied from the Chinese one, it had a social recognition because it has been seen fear in its procedure nevertheless it paid a high price going too far to students competition. It was call “examination hell” and many parents regret that their children were exposed to such stress.

Monbusho (the Ministry of Education) suggested to the universities to implement multiple criteria of admission such as essays, interviews, school reports, practical skill texts, in addition to scholastic tests (MESC, 1990). A common first-stage has been set up by NCUEE (National Center University Entrance Examination) based on high school level. This first step was followed to specific admission process defined by each institution in order to confirm further knowledge in specific areas. This common exam has been used by

public universities since 1979 but was in 1990 when private institutions begun to apply it. It is important to say that:

"The Constitution of Japan, however, gives universities independent determination of admissions criteria, and most still also require their own unique exams. Widespread change will require faculty decisions at hundreds of universities, and that could take many years" (Jackson, 2004:11).

Still the meaning of "bushido" the code of the samurai is up to day in daily Japanese life at some extent. The presence of that value based on duty to the emperor, one's parents and teachers, obligations and indebtedness makes it difficult for all the new ideas to face the 21st century.

Another difficulty was once teachers and professors who did not have experience in creative learning were asking to teach in a creative and innovative way. How could they manage to work in that profile? The problem about the foreign language of instruction was quite related, they had knowledge about grammar but not enough skills to be fluent in conversation in the foreign language.

Teacher's union in Japan count almost fifty percent of the public school teacher and even when they are not represented in the NCER, at same extent they can be quite powerful when the time to implement the new plans takes place, whether they are all in the same position.

Nevertheless it was also possible to identify forces propelling the reform, like politicians and teachers support, Parental reactions, Parallel changes in the society and in service training.

Politicians believed in the need of the reform but also they were concerned about the difficulties it had and even the adverse effects that could escort some objective of the reform. However the idea of preparing for the future means that nation should move forward as generally proposed, with carefully planning.

While in the beginning the Japan teacher's Union showed opposition to the coming events. Later many teachers changed their mind and believed in the need of the present efficient oriented reform. Some implementations were popularly well accepted such as reduction in the number of students (they used to have 40) and the establishing of two days

off (weekend). Nevertheless there were other issues difficult to face, being the individualization the most controversial.

In relation with higher education and its admission, examination process has showed a strong rejection from teachers and principals due to the high level of stress on university admission tests. They believe that the challenge to access in the wished institution and the narrow criteria used for selection have focused school instruction too narrowly on preparation for the entrance exams.

Parents are concerned about the education of their children. In one hand they are worried about bullying, juvenile violence, limited effort, high degree of stress surrounding the entrance examination. Those factors make parents support and encourage the reform. However, in the other hand some of the implementation brings some new problems. The idea of individualization, the need to deal with the child during the weekend and the worry about what kind of university examination they will face make parents really concern about the changes. After the wide variety and the complication situation of the admission process, some parents consider the “examination hell” a right procedure to select student, at least somehow it is considered fair for everyone.

At the same time other parallel changes in the society emerged also influencing the acceptance of this political reform. The frenzied Japanese society could impress anyone, along with a specific issues related with education such as current privatization, increased variety in “juku” activities, the remedial education trend and so on, there are many others drawbacks that show how Japanese society is changing and ready for the 21st century, for instance:

1) Their newspaper readership rate is twice that of the United States. Despite a population half the size of that in the US (Management and Coordination Agency, 1992:133-134)

2) Seven percent of the population traveled abroad in 1989 (Foreign Press Center / Japan, 1991:103-110)

3) National surveys show that 50 percent of the population thinks Japan 'should contribute to the solution of global issues' (Prime Minister's Office, 1992:2 in Hechter, 1993)

To help the reform process from the low levels, Monbusho has design a different kind of program to train teachers in the new technologies and in the practice of innovation pedagogy. It has been achieved in specific centers where new teachers might attempt for two weeks training. Other programs by master teachers visiting schools are running.

3.3.4 Future and coming problems

Being already in the 21st century is expected that Japanese higher education contribute to the creation of new knowledge, technologies and culture then Japan could be plenty considered as an international reference. Japanese university is been criticized by diverse groups of government, student, business and society for the low quality of their undergraduate education, the lack of evaluation system and wrong use of the autonomy of each school in the university, being the last one the biggest obstacle for any reform. The autonomy is represented in the chair system that should change in order to face all the compromises that the university has with the society (Ogawa, 2002:90).

According with University Council Report 1998, two of the main issues in its agenda were: a) creation of flexible organization able to meet with the social needs; and b) strengthening of leadership and proposing an organizational change (Ogawa, 2002:91). However the report set up succinctly that the education and research level has to be developed until be competitive in the ranked universities. Japan has showed his concern about itself to the rest of the world (Doyon, 2001:447).

3.4 Summary

In Japanese society, in extent in the higher education environment, prestige is highly valued. It ought to reflect quality as a basic definition nevertheless its connotation goes further than that. Prestige strongly affects how institutions consider themselves and mostly

how they are treated in the media. With the American influences after the WW II the ranking ideology was implemented. This categorizes how worthy is to attend each university. It creates a market reference, which encourage the competition (Geiger, 2004 in Margison, 2006:5). We can look at those references from different perspectives: knowledge production, market relationship, source of money, student competition. However there is discussion about whether all the main features that high prestige institutions have are represented on ranking systems. Some performances are really difficult to measure and not worthy for depending who. There are different interest and goals for each agents involved. Teaching quality, student needs, cost of education not always takes part of the most prestigious evaluation ranked.

Prestige could be considered as the peak of the iceberg, assuring a high prestige means everything is working well. No doubt about the tough competition it represents for institutions nowadays. The low funding support from the state and the main source of revenue (students) decreasing forces institutions to be competitive. Education policy is been challenging and changing dramatically in private institutions policy and implementation.

The low quality teaching in some private universities have been under suspicion (Doyon, 2001:446). The whole Japanese system is been shaking. The society changes, the demands increase, the government support and control decrease and market onset, those factors steer strong competition where institutions have the task and need to implement the appropriate measures in order to increase and maintain their prestige and then make them a successful and productive institution.

4 Japanese Private Institutions

This chapter aims at developing analysis concerning Japanese private institutions in order to understand how the changes in environment may influence their admission policies. Firstly a description of how private universities are running in the national scenery is showed. How private system has been set up. Somehow it is getting closer to the public system in relation with their problems and challenges. The institutional theory explored how endogenous features such as values, belief, preferences influence on its organization and adapted process. Since they are private the marketing rules are the main influences over their activities. Afterwards how admission process was implemented based on Doyon's text and how social features influences the process is analyzed.

4.1 Introduction

Privatization is seen as the most dynamic and faster growing segment on post-secondary education. Unprecedented demands for access in tertiary education and the unwillingness or inability from government to funding sets up the perfect environment for the development of privatization. All this process took place in Japan and other Asian countries (South Korea, Taiwan, Philippine) a few years ago (Altbach, 1999:311). The economic difficulties⁸ and the political and ideological global tendencies have forced government to reduce the expenditures in higher education, even when day by day they realize the economical and social power that higher education has for the development of the country. It has brought the phenomenon of privatization to public institution as a way to save government money and to force higher education system to be more entrepreneurial and market oriented. The increase in the tuition fees by public institutions, the growing competition on private institutions for public funding and new stakeholder actions are making public and private institutions more and more similar.

As mentioned before, with the massification process after the WW II many aspects changed really fast in Japan. The idea of elite university theoretically was decreasing, the

⁸ Economic crisis in 1970

post-massification system come, the lack of government support was presented and the fast growing of private sector tried to respond the increase demands over higher education field.

Japan was the most powerful country in Asia on the modern era, with a strong cultural influence everywhere making it a really interesting case to study.

While the idea of education as a “public good” is changing to “private good” in western countries there are severe differences to Japan. The value of the degrees, the accreditation society makes Japan “unique”. Despite it has happened at different time, similarities and difficulties in privatization process in Japan with western countries can be analysed.

Looking briefly worldwide, it is possible to assume that private institutions are growing fast all around the world and with some exception they take the low levels of academic hierarchy. However they have the possibility to survive being adaptable to the rapid social changes, market conditions, student interest and economic needs.

Private system can have some advantage over the public one. National and Local public universities have been strictly controlled by the government and powerful faculty leadership which difficult several implementations trying to assure their autonomy. Moreover the fact that Japanese mentality demands considerable amount of time to come up with new measures does not help to be update with the new trends. The time consuming on the decision making and the diversity in their implementation makes the system slow. However, although private institutions are also affected by this long period to decide they are somehow free of the control government and faculty leadership.

As tuitions fees are their main sources of incomes, they have more need to attract students. This requires careful planning concerning students number, the cost per students and expenditure level. An appropriate and efficient admission process will be required. Before 1952, private universities never received any subsidy from the government. Based on the article 89 of the Japanese Constitution prohibited spending “public money or other property” to “any educational enterprise not under the control of public authority”. However, private institutions started to face several economic problems then government supported the private sector and took some measures to resemble both sectors. It brought several problems such as the students complained about the rising tuition fees in the public

sector and for the huge debt to the state for capital investment in the new campus. In consequence since 1975 government started to provide subsidies for private universities. Private School Promotion Subsidy required encouraging and promoting private institutions (Oba, 2005:17). This law allowed subsidizing up to 50% of the private institutions expenditure, although it was never achieved. Government never had enough money to support that law. However some economic support was given. Even when it never reached the mentioned 50% the subsidized to private universities was trimmed down until 12% of their total current expenditures. Originally these help was given in from of block grants but nowadays it shifted to more project based allocations (Murayama, 2008:13).

Furthermore, there were some reforms which open the sources and competition in the economic higher education field.

The status of non-profit private institution is the most widespread in Japan. They provide education and engage in research with legal authority to own and manage them. The huge private system in Japan has different kinds of organization, usually it is difficult to discern the borderline between non-profit and profit aims.

For-profit private higher education institutions have been extending in the last two decades they have been more accepted by current laws in the government effort to create a more efficient and entrepreneurial economy. The offer is strictly related with the social demands. It makes most of these institutions very specialize field an example could be Digital Graduate School in Osaka opened in April 2004 (Oba, 2005:222).

It is expected that for-profit private system will keep growing, which is known as a major phenomenon worldwide. The current national systems (public and private) need to accommodate to this new competition. Since the service they offer is high demanding even when they do not have authorization to offer degree, they bring new challenges for accreditation and control (Altbach, 1997:317).

Academic institutions have been expanding in number, size, types and nature. They have become part of the diverse institutional systems. Minister of Education and politicians must consider the new situation and propose and let new actions. Japan is a country with a

very strong supervision over private sector⁹, always on the shadow of prestigious National Universities, has to accept the competition and the dramatic changes that Japanese society is taking. Japanese government established in 1991 NIAD (National Institution for Academic degree) it was changed in 1998 to NIAD-UE (National Institution for Academic Degree and University Evaluation) run by MEXT¹⁰. The objectives are:

- To contribute to the improvement of quality in universities... through conducting evaluation and research activities.
- To contribute to the society which can value the learners' academic ability appropriately through awarding academic degrees to learners who mark additional achievement (NIAD-UE, 2008).

The questions how much autonomy should private higher education has? And other related with who does control their quality? Are they measured for their quality or their relevance? How much responsibility do they have for a public good? The international trend to answer those question could be summarize to give more capacity to private sector but at the same time it has to be under any kind of recognize accountability agency.

It is expected that higher education ensures a higher income and greater opportunities for graduates, but how can it be measured in Japanese system where the privatization is spreading out, where public institutions charge expensive tuition fees and the company training is a basic and main requirement in the labor market. Families have to pay but are they paying for education or credentials? Is it a public good? Accountability is strongly set up in public education nevertheless private sector has been running freedom. Nowadays NIAD-EU is focusing on private institutions as well, there are many things left to do on institution procedures and social and market recognition.

Private institutions deal with on all the hierarchy and size levels. That is why it is impossible to generalize. A few of them are on the top as many others struggle to survive at the medium, lower end of the prestige hierarchy. Whilst research activity belongs to the top ones, the internationalization trend is more presented on private sector than in public one. It is based in the smoothly flexibility that private institution can achieve, without strict

⁹ In matters such as establishing new institutions or changing the curriculum but not in admission policy

¹⁰ MEXT: Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology

control such as governmental one over the public system. However for private sector is urgent to find the balance between autonomy and accountability. They have to look for quality education ensuring cost-efficiency. Experimental approaches are being developed follow by accreditation and quality control system which are emerging in private and public sectors¹¹. The current privatization brings a strong risk of being dominated under the market orientation, losing the original orientation of university ideas: pursuit of knowledge and truth, academic freedom and education for all (Altbach, 1997:321).

Japanese government has been avoiding, as far as possible, direct interferences in higher education. The expressed reason has been not to infringe academic freedom. But, the economic question has also been delimitating its active action since its major economic effort has been focused on pre-higher education expansion. By the second baby-boom 1956-1965, when higher education needed more support and infrastructures concerning the need for an efficient higher education system to the successful develop of the country was private system who supplied the increase demand in a strong competition market.

"Michio Nagai, sociologist of education and former minister of education, sarcastically suggested that with respect to higher education, "no policy" was the traditional policy of the Japanese government" (Nikamura, 1997:141).

To meet with the great demand of applications in higher education, private sector grew until cover almost 80% of the student college population without any expanding of the public sector which wanted to keep the high level as a model and reference. It also let government save money. The scarce funding policy applied by the government could be summarized by:

"The traditional policy of the government for the private sector has been something like a "laissez-faire" i.e. a "no support and no control" policy" (Nikamura, 1997:142).

With the economic development, the number of students attending high schools almost reached 90% and then the massification into the university demanded much attention to high education field.

¹¹ NIAD-EU, JUAA,

Private sector has continuously increased with respect to number of students, institutions and academic staff. In 1996 private system enroll 73.2 % of the college population (Monbusho, 1996).

With that lack of education policy, private sector grew without control even in its education quality. It brought the next problem:

Japan allowed the fast growth of private sector, accepting the strong position of the market in its educational system. This market approach brought clear consequences to providers and costumers involving them in a competitive race. Families and students have to pay for their education, even attending the public institutions. They demand the maximum benefit in a consumer and credential society with remarkable traditional values. The rules of the game were well understood. It brought students competition for the best institutions in order to obtain benefit once they are graduated and also institutions compete for the customer of preferred. Then the vicious circle for top universities and top students was closed. Nevertheless in the higher education environment there was place for more. Actually these elite institutions were a really small percent of the national system; mostly public institution (the old seven Imperial Universities and some national universities) with a few exception of some private (Waseda University and Keio University). The standard institutions, mostly private, compete for the best students they can attract in order to improve their prestige and climb up in the ranking.

That privatization growth was based on the increase population after the WW II and the successful Japanese economy. Afterward Japan was facing the next decades with new goals. The incident of the economic crisis in 1970s, the changing society (aging Japanese society and the decreasing population) and industry demands among others has changed the environment. Subsequently higher education is struggling to face with the commitments what it is supposed to deal with.

J.F. Oberlin University is an example of private institution which has to do its best in order to attract enough and the best students possible. The lack of quality control from the state and the institutions' autonomy are brought the problem of lack of trust on the Japanese higher education. Universities are competing for surviving. Basically private institutions are those which have the biggest problems (public universities at local and

prefectural level start to face problems as well). They do not have the prestige advantage or the state support even when it is decreasing and their main sources of incomes are the tuition fees that students pay.

In 2001 during Koizumi Cabinet, Minister of Education Miss Tayomo came up with “Top 30” plan “Top 30 universities towards global top standards”, which was later to be renamed as the “Center of Excellence in the 21 century”.

Basically the plan promoted a selection of leading research universities where the president of each nominated his candidates in order to encourage the centralization of power within the university. It was looking for a more feasible implementation of the current education reforms by the institution leading. Another measure involved in this plan and related with the deregulation process which also affected the private sector was that Ministry of Education allowed either all kind of public¹² or private institutions to participate in the program. It had a “negative” impact in national universities which faced more competition for the governmental support. The competition was spreading out (Kitakawa, 2005:6).

It is a direct consequence of Koizumi’s Cabinet policy, privatization process means competition and in higher education with stronger social demands, lack of trust in tertiary education, wider student variety, decreasing population and external pressures force institutions policy to up to date in order to be successful. This added to the deregulation process gave to the institution the autonomy and commitment on admission policy to implement their programs.

However, industry is also taking its position, demanding new kind of work forces. In Japan unlike many others developed countries companies have been relied on in-house training for new hires and do not value too much what has been learnt in the university, what justifies credential Japanese style. Accordingly the prestige of the university is more important than the quality of the service provide (Oba, 2005:298). However the economic bubble in 1990, the privatization, lifelong learning, deregulation and so on have brought dramatic changes in Japanese society and reforming the higher education system was seen

¹² There are two kinds: national and public

National, are the most prestigious ones and are control by the Monbusho

Public, control by local or prefectural government

as a need (Muta, 2000:462). There has been development in Japanese university-industry collaboration since 1990s based on stronger collaboration between two ministries METI¹³ and MEXT (Kitakawa, 2005:6). Nevertheless Japanese industry still is propensity to value more from where the degree institutions' belongs than the value added during the university courses at least in big companies where everyone is eager to work. On the other hand medium and small size cannot afford expensive training anymore. Then there is the belief that globalization trend will change the recruitment process of present Japanese generations. Recover the mutual trust of Japanese education among all the agents involved seems necessary if Japanese higher education wants to thrive in a global market (Yonezawa, 2003:153).

4.2 Access in Japanese higher education

Entrance examination system in Japan has been one of the most popular topics criticized by non-academic community. It represents, simultaneous, the end of high school education, the first step after finished high school and then the beginning of the university life. No doubt, it is a relevant issue which concerns all students who want to get to higher education thereby society, government, industry, and institutions takes part of it. However no ones can disregard the individual consequences that this exam has in Japanese students.

Despite entrance examination being a hot issue in Japan which has been influenced by many reforms in compulsory education as well in higher education, enough changes did not take place until now. The hierarchical system makes relevant differences between the top institutions and the others.

The stressful process that students suffer, to apply for prestige universities, has been blamed to affect negatively in lower education with the result of bullying, suicide, violence in schools and school refusal among others.

The exam was based on objective questions where student need to learn by heart with strict rote learning without any stimulation for creativity intellectual activity. Students have to be really hard workers during all their high school life, even before, that mean they do

¹³ The Ministry of Economy, Trade and Industry

not have chances to develop social skills and intellectual ability concerned with inspiration, innovation and creativity (Hayes, 1997 in Doyon, 2001:462).

A report from OECD (1997,10) showed how the strong selective process in Japanese education finish is really low once they pass all the requirement, due to the mobility of the students among faculties or institutions into the university. Families and students have the goal to be admitted in the best possible institution. It is consider the main credential to get a job in a big company. The prestige of the institution form where the degree belongs will be more value than the skills or knowledge students could learn there.

Here is where student credential style takes part in Japanese society. The prestige of the university again will be a determinate fact in their job promotion and also it seems as a marriage certificate. It is important to say that is known on once students get a place in prestigious institutions, which use to be more difficult that the own degree, they just rest on their laurels and enjoy the university life.

Entrance examination is closely related with many other reforms that should take place in the process of changing Japanese higher education for the 21st century. If all these reform are truly be effective we could see their effect in the entrance examination process. The admission process could be considered as the catalyst of the other reforms (Doyon, 2001:464).

But as Frost (1991:303) said, the business in Japanese society behind this exam with universities, lucrative "cram school" industry and publication making money do not help to develop and implement important changes (Doyon, 2001:463).

The situation after many reforms does not change too much, as professor Shimizu of Tokyo University wrote that:

"the typical prospective examinee has come to be close-minded, selfish, and lonely... Even his parents tend to be nervous and on edge" (Doyon 2001:464).

Posteriori reports Central Education Council 1996 pointed out about:

"children as being too busy, lacking the social skills to relate to other people, late in gaining independence, facing excessive competition for entrance examinations,

and as experiencing bullying and school refusal” (Okano and Tsuchiya 1999, p. 227 in Doyon, 2001:464).

As it could be seen in the last thirty six years at least in some stage of the society thing are not changed.

The credential system and the high competition have set up a strong hierarchical Japanese system. In one hand, once you get a place in a top university you can have a successful life. But in the other hand, students who did manage to get one of those place even when they could be talented they are limited to stay in a medium-low stage in their professional lives. Society is losing talented people it is something that any education system can not accept.

Also it is important to consider the fact that in any educational system one of the main aims of the compulsory education is the access to post-secondary education. It is demonstrated that students from more powerful and middle social groups always enjoy advantages. In the specific case of Japan we need to analysis several points. The successful Japanese economy allows students to attend higher education where 80% of the student population is in role in private institutions. Although in Japan there is post-massification system policy reform has to open up new system to render students more socially egalitarian (Marginson, 2006:6).

Neither high school nor university is compulsory in Japan. That means public funding in education goes to the lower steps. One commitment of the state is to provide high competences to everyone in order to produce useful citizens but considering the large population and the difficulties of their languages, lower education levels demand a big amount of money (from kinder garden to junior high school). It is recognized that these first levels really contribute to the competence instruction of the Japanese population. The inconvenient of the high expenses in low levels is presented in the lack of economic support for further studies (high school and higher education) which nowadays is being a basic requirement for the labor market.

Despite of considering private education expensive in Japan, whether the Japanese education system is egalitarian or not is questioned. The question if the current system is an indirect way to benefit the wealthy society class is discussed based on those who belong

to high level class has more changes to access to prestige primary and high schools which have higher rate of enrolment in prestigious universities (James and Benjamin, 1986:470).

4.2.1 Present of access in Japanese private institutions

Either an important part of the academic community and non-academic has been wished a shift on the role of entrance examination process and the growth of the remedial education. The current influences such as decreasing number of high school student graduates which more diversify feature has already influences in the examination process and education itself (Mori, 2002:27).

The coming post-massification era influences on the balance between demand and supply and with the decreasing number of student in higher education has done the entrance examination less severe. Before going deeper in the analysis of access in private higher education some questions as to be clarified; as Mori previewed (2002:30) by the time of 2009 students will not need to compete to access in higher education, that means the number of place will be the same than the students who want to apply. It could be consider as an improvement due to entrance examination does not need to sort out students as it has done before. Nevertheless it does not mean everyone can access to higher education in Japan. First students will face the economic barrier, due to 80% of the enrollment is in private institutions where student pay high tuition fees and secondly even when they can afford the education cost they will need to score good grades on national entrance examination and specific faculty test if they want to enjoy a prestigious institution which brings substantial benefit in professional and social aspects.

The examination process has changed, now more ways are available the exam does not require only memorizing, students have more chance to value their qualities. Anyhow the hierarchical academic institutional system and the influences of accreditation society in Japan recall the power of the traditional way to select students by memory test exams. The competition for prestige institutions is tough thus student needs to work really hard¹⁴ from early stages to access there and also is important to point out that an equalitarian

¹⁴ See point 4.3 Japanese society in educational matters

system is not running. Students from medium-high social level have advantage to access prestige institutions.

Private institutions have been forced to rethink their teaching methodologies at faculty level and tackle a remedial education as an institution. The increase number of non-traditional students, internationalization, lifelong learning process and the accreditation society has brought to the university (public and private) the need to become more educational-oriented institutions. Whilst good students keep competing to enroll in top universities, the least competitive students can now access without difficulty (Murayama, 2004:15).

Even when Japanese higher education seems to go away of the “examination hell” as its “presentation card” new challenges are coming.

As has been said access is a “hot” topic with which society is always really concerned. We can find many attempts of change in the last 100 years. Nevertheless was in the third wave reform with Nakasone that the previous situations start to change. In 1985 the Ministry of Education formed the Council for Reform in University Entrance Examination (CRUEE) which brought a new common test with different characteristics from the one before (*Kyotsu Ichiji*). However the implementation was not successful because many of the recommendation were deemed not feasible. After years of wrangling in 1991 The NCUEE¹⁵ proposed a new test (*Center Shiken*) where they avoid the terms such as national and public, reduce the number of subject that students have to take from 7 to 5 although the main innovation was that it was allow to be used by private institutions in their examination process. This measure was quite polemic, due to NCUEE regards information about students’ college preferences from *yobikos*. The well established examination industry did not let public organization interfere in its “business”. However professors¹⁶ from private institutions did not consider the implementation as convenient for private institutions, taking the same exam brings a direct and open competition in the rankings between public and private universities. Nevertheless, as of 2000 nearly haft of the private institutions¹⁷ were admitting the NCUEE test in their admission process. Obviously facing the decreasing demand it is a convenient way for prospective students who can apply

¹⁵ NCUEE: National Center University Entrance Examination

¹⁶ Takayasu Okushima, a faculty member of the School of Law at Waseda University, a private institution.

¹⁷ Source: National Center for University Entrance Examination, 2000.

which the same exam to both systems: public and private. In the current competition between institutions to attracting student every facility for students is welcome (Mori, 2002:35).

In order to facilitate the admission process to the new kind of students, in 1980 public universities under Nakasone Cabinet started to follow the private model turning admission process more open. Recommendation letter, essay and interviews were used for public institutions as well.

"The diversification of admissions criteria lessens the severity of the cutthroat competition caused by a single entrance examination" (Mori, 2002:36).

Aside from this new process the establishment of the admission office's exam was something that significantly changed the university admission. It was originally implemented in one of the most prestigious private institutions, Keio University. They shift the power of faculties and faculty members in charge of all the admission process to professional administrators. They start to consider extracurricular activities: sports, volunteer work and culture performances in their evaluation applicants instead of focusing exclusively on intellectual abilities.

These measures that at the end took place in order to contribute towards opening the Japanese higher education could be consider the aims of *Kyotsu Ichiji*¹⁸ proposed in 1979. It is important to remind that even when the main aim was reduce hurdles the practical goal was to increase enrollment (Mori, 2002:36).

4.2.2 Remedial education

Addressing the topic of remedial education will give us a view of how students arrive to higher education once they are graduated by high school and passed the examination process. Society and institutions are not only aware about the nature of the admission processes it also about the quality of the students and their real needs in higher education. As far as it is closer to the population and directly affects the daily life in Japanese society these concerns and complains are more present.

¹⁸ Reduce the burden on students applications to university

The curriculum gap between secondary and post-secondary education is not new. Nevertheless it has been more evident in the 1980 with Nakasone Cabinet when changes have started to make effects. The dominant trend from 1942 until 2003 has been basically to reduce the units (contents) and diversified what is touch in high school in order to be graduated. It has had a direct consequence in higher education where professors expect a minimum of knowledge that apparently student do not have.

Before 1980 when the admission process started to change this problem did not exist, since the strict examination process worked as a quality measure. But making the admission process less severe and the institutions competing for students has ushered students with lower academic abilities into the university. There have been several researchers' projects about how students start their university studies, (Shimbun, 2000). The low quality of some students showed in that research came up with complains from industry, medical association and population in general.

To face the current problem many universities started to redesign their curriculum regarding to the incoming student's experiences. It would cover from specific courses in academic writing, public speaking to data process and motivation for study. In 1998 the University Council suggested a national policy on remedial education which basically said:

Each college and university is required to aid high school students in choosing courses of study by providing information about the contents and to explain to students what is expected of them before they enroll. These steps are needed for the sake of students' smooth transition from high schools to colleges and universities, and for this implementation to occur, awareness of the status of high school education is necessary. Additionally, individual higher education institutions may give entrance examinations in subjects relevant to their curriculum. They also may require prospective students to study those subjects in high school. In both cases, however, it is necessary for higher education institutions to encourage students' autonomous choices of study. After admission, colleges and universities are required to carefully consider students' learning needs in accordance with each student's high school experience. It is strongly urged that higher education institutions make students' transitions smooth (Mori, 2002:39).

Clearly higher education is strongly connected or even depending on secondary education. The transformation to a comprehend education system as whole has already

took place in Japan. It demands a radical shift of how to look at Japanese educational system, from the lower rungs of the ladder rather than from the higher (Mori, 2002:40).

The new trend and associated measures raised new questions and problems. Who should teach these remedial education lessons? Should students get credits for their graduation? Considering the social variables such as accreditation system, new and wide kind of students and the higher consideration about students needs due to the decrease number of high school graduated plus the powerful industry concerning with the extracurricular activities cram schools, *yobikos* and so on the remedial education is getting more and more magnitude.

4.3 Japanese society in education matters

In trying to interpret higher education system in Japan one cannot disregard its closer relation with the society. In a vertical link junior and senior high school are directly tie with post-secondary education and at the same time those level are horizontally link with social life.

"Japan as multifaceted society, complex society... where desirable and undesirable elements are linked... Observers would be required to examine the processes in which its various parts depend on many others, and upon which the overall functioning of Japanese society depends" (Yoshio, 1997-24-25 in Doyon, 2001:444).

Problems in low level of education such as bullying, declining social levels, school refusal have been increasing in the last 25 years. The declining 18 year-old population has restructured institutions in their admission process. Universities have been criticized for being a "leisure land" for teachers and students. After students work really hard to pass the examination hell, a time of relax is followed before they go into the labor market. New generations of students have appeared on the university campus. These students do not have the same background than their parents. They are growing up in a consumer society, the dominance of values such as playfulness, escape, tentativeness, anarchy have take away the sense of rigidity, calculation, loyalty, fixity, hierarchy that generations before believed (Doyon, 2001:449). While social attention is focusing on problems such as bulling and school refusal in the low levels society has to be concern with the absent at

university level. Its lack of good higher education instructions and industry calling for different and better graduate makes urgent a different social view (Doyon, 2001:444).

Admission process could, in same extent, represent the new trends and institutions aims. Moreover the influence of the Japanese society in the examination process will be examined. First of all, it is important to specify that the examination hell takes place at the middle point in Japanese student life. It is located at one specific time defining future chance of each individual. But let's reflect about when the "race" or preparatory process starts and also how far its consequences can be.

The competition starts when parent persuade their children to attend *jukus* and cram schools, almost 40% of the final year student in primary and 60% in junior high are in role 1993 (Takeuchi, 1997:183).

The competition for education status in Japan is extremely keen. To justify this assumption it will not be enough to show up the accreditation society system and neither for scarcity of places nor inadequate supply of places at high schools and universities. The competition itself, the idea of surmounts makes students struggle to aim for a higher level. This nonconformity makes Japanese from the lower ages look for their best. Japanese education system either on high school or university is strongly segmented by Z-scored from mock-examination conducted by examination preparatory industry. From them, families know by what ranking of public institution their kid will be admitted. Official selection of high school is done by G.A.P. (Grade Point Average) on junior high school grades. This selective process makes parents and teachers to encourage student to work hard and then attend extra-curricular activities.

Furthermore, the next step university also follows the same stratified organization in this case by the entrance examination scores. It shows a dominant characteristic of Japanese education system.

Considering how tough the system is for young students, the question why those "kids" are so motivated to study so hard at that low age? It is true that the stratification system does not let them dream with institutions far from their Z-score, it really cools-out. However it is also used to motivate student to aim for a higher levels. Whether they score 55 (Z-score), they know they could apply to 60 or even 65 Z-score school if they work

harder. Educational selection in Japan has this double mechanism cool-out and re-heats student aspirations (Takeuchi, 1997:190).

What is clear is the idea that “faith in effortism” is dominating in Japanese society. Their exam style, where the memorizing is the main tool and intelligent and others abilities are left out, defines the best way to be successful in the process. However there is such kind of stratification where no one is drop out, everyone has the chance and is pushed to do his/her best in order to compete at the given level to get the next one. This is why the advice to study a bit more is given to all the students and they believe on relation of effort and academic achieve (Takeuchi, 1997:191).

Students are submitted in the process since they are young kids that they only thing about the next level, the next examination process. It diminishes occupational aspirations, even if they do not worry about whether what they are learning is relevant for future knowledge or future jobs. Nothing out of their next step in the higher rank they can achieve concerns them.

Once students are graduated time for hunting job starts. It is belief that Japanese are not hire, they go further, they are part of the company: “*shusha*” (literally, getting a company) rather than “*shushoku*” (literally, getting a job). Graduated look for companies, they apply even when without knowing what kind of job, first is to get a place and then learn and be selective for a specific job. However is important to mention what enterprise wants. New employees take the lower levels they do not have to think, their tasks are limited to obey their superior. Another fact is the accreditation system where is believed that a graduate in education by prestigious university will be hire by a prestigious bank before a graduate in economics from a lower university, being all the process dependent upon the examination process.

Many things are changing in Japan society, economic situation, university aims and procedures and of course the entrance examination is forcing the market, institutions and government to act in different way.

5 J.F. Oberlin University, Admission Process

In the next chapter the thesis sets up on the case study, J.F. Oberlin University. An introduction about funder, establishment, institution and brief history event are presented. Afterward the courses offered, the kind of colleges and a deeply descriptions of each admission process: procedures, requirements and schedule is explained in order to understand how the admission policy is implemented in a real context attending with J.F. Oberlin university needs and goals.

5.1 Introduction

J. F. Oberlin University is a private co-educational institution located in the Tokyo suburb of Machida. The institution's name comes from the Lutheran pastor and philanthropist Jean Frederic Oberlin (1740-1826) from whom official philosophy derives. His name also shows the influence and historical link with Oberlin College in Ohio, U.S.A. where the alma mater and founder studied, Yasuzo Shimizu. The Japanese characters chosen to write Oberlin means "beautiful cherry orchard" which is pronounce (Obirin). J. F. Oberlin's badge is the "three nails crown," symbolizing the struggles of Christ and the glory and valor that derive from them.



J.F. Oberlin University and affiliated Schools was established in Japan in 1946. His first location and the main one nowadays was Machida where it has been continuously growing. In 2007 other campus was opened in downtown Tokyo, Utsuya. Educational complex consists of kindergarten, junior high school, senior high school, junior college, four-year University, and graduate school. In total, there are over 10,000 students studying there. Only in the university there are 8,000 students.

Yasuzo Shimizu who was the founder of J.F. Oberlin, started his career as a Christian missionary to China in 1917. His first project was Christian welfare center for children, in 1921, he established The Chongzhen Girls School. His aim was to provide young Chinese girls with basic education and handicraft skills. During two decades the school was growing and produced more than 700 hundreds graduates until Japan's defeat in the Pacific War which forced Shimizu to give up the school and return to Japan.

Afterward, in the spring of 1946 Shimizu and his wife, Ikuko with the help of the great Christian internationalist, Toyohiko Kagawa established J.F. Oberlin University and affiliated Schools. Using their experience in China they run the new institution with the Chongzhen's spirit "Learning and Labor". This concept was adopted from their alma mater, Oberlin College in Ohio. Furthermore it also brought universal ideal of Christianity and open-heart internationalism.

J.F. Oberlin University is update to the new trends. Its aims are to produce flexible, open-mind graduates equipped with knowledge, attitudes and communication skills that will enable them to participate in the changing society and at the same time keeping their personal faith in the individual and their relationship with the supreme power. "*I am with you and will watch over you wherever you go*" (Genesis 28:15) this idea remains the J.F. Oberlin's educational philosophy as a legacy of Yasuzo Shimizu.

Oberlin has had a strong international orientation from its beginning. It has always sought to foster students with an international outlook and with useful skills in today's increasingly complex world. That is why J.F. Oberlin University maintains active exchange relationships with many foreign universities.

Glory is reached by hosting difficulties; one of the favorite quotations from Yasuzo Shimizu was "*No matter what the odds, never loss the hope*" and "*learn*" those ideas became the foundation of his life and his philosophy education.

In 2006 the 60th anniversary of the foundation of the institution in Japan took place. This event was used to change the formal name of the institutions, something that has given me some misunderstanding. While the institutions was called and known officially as J.F. Obirin it has been changed back to J.F. Oberlin which was the spelling used by their founder.

5.2 Access

J.F. Oberlin University offers undergraduate and post-graduate programs. Moreover it also counts with a comprehensive research organization section. Undergraduate courses are divided on four main colleges: College of Liberal Arts, College of Performing and Visual Arts, College of Business Management and College of Health and Welfare. However there is another college called: University College of Cornerstone Education which is designing to deal with the needed remedial education. It is a step whereby all the students have to go through in their first year in the institution not matter which field of study they chose. Among each college students have many choices to decide the specific fields of studies in which they want to be enrolled. Two matters are particularly different from what we know in other education systems; one is that students are accepted to an institution and not a specific field of studies, being only, during their first year in the Cornerstone College that they have to choose which will be their next step. The other is that one of the specializations on the Business College is on the Aviation field where students have the chance to be a professional pilot. In the Annex II there are some more Colleges, not mention here because, although they are still running, there is not more admission for them, once the student enrolled graduate those College will be over¹⁹.

The procedures for applying to J.F. Oberlin University to access to its undergraduate educational programs (separated on four colleges) are divided on seven categories. That will be presented and described further. The following data have been gathering from “Guidebook for Entrance Examination, 2009 J.F. Oberlin University” and translated by PhD student of the same institution Tetsuya Wagatsuma.

Admission Office (AO) *Nyuugakusya Senbatsu*

Admission Office is the procedure which enrolled more students, 675 in 2007. The most popular college in all the procedures was Colleges of Liberal Arts following by College of Business and Management which 950 and 360 students’ respectably. The

¹⁹ In relation with the others educational levels in the institution I will not analyse or describe them due to the fact that they are not related with the high school graduate access process. Anyhow in the annex II and IV there is information about the courses which are been teaching and their organization.

present quota of admitted student in the last year (2007-2008) through this procedure in each college was:

Table 5.1 Quota of enrollment through Admission Office

COLLEGE	NUMBER OF STUDENTS
College Liberal Arts	342
College Business and Management	145
College of Health and Welfare	72
College of performing and Visual Art	116

Source: Guidebook for Entrance Examination J.F. Oberlin University (2008) p.13

There are two options to apply by this way:

Entrance Examination by Admission Office *Nyuugakusya Senbatsu*. The requirements are: first a single or concurrent²⁰ application. Second be a high school graduated or a candidate who is expected to graduate a high school on March of the current year. This last requirement could be supply by a student who finished school education for 12 years or by a student who has academic ability equivalent to a high school graduate or a person who is expected to have the ability²¹ on March of the current year.

Special Entrance Examination by Admission Office,

b.1) Sports, *AO Nyuugakusya Tokubetsu Senbatsu Sports* .Requirement: Single application, person who is expected to make a spectacular showing in athletic skills specified by J.F. Oberlin University and the second requirement in section “a”.

b.2) Returnee²², *AO Nyuugakusya Tokubetsu Senbatsu Kikokuseito*. Requirement: Concurrent application, person who is a Japanese citizen or has permanent resident visa or long term resident visa, moreover those people has been educated in a primary or

²⁰ Concurrent: available to apply for some other universities

²¹ There is a national exam to admit the academic ability for person who does not go to high school in Japan

²² Returnee: a person who has been studying abroad for more than one year.

secondary school in a foreign country for more than one year need: to be graduated a high school or be expected to graduated in Japan by March or graduated in a high school in foreign country or a person recognized by J.F. Oberlin University who has ability equivalent to the two condition before. This last one has to be also approved by MEXT.

b.3) Alumni, *AO Nyuugakusya Tokubetsu Senbatsu Dousou Seito*. Requirement: Single application, a person who has or had had a relative within the third degree of consanguinity studying here and the second condition in part “a”.

b.4) Education Association of Christian School in Japan, *AO Nyuugakusya Tokubetsu Senbatsu Kirisutokyou Gatsukoukyouiku Doumey*. Requirement: single application, a student who goes to high school which is member of Educational Association of Christian School in Japan and second condition of part “a”.

b.5) Christian, *AO Nyuugakusya Tokubetsu Senbatsu Kirisutokyou*. Requirement: single application, a person who has been baptized and is recommended by a priest and second condition in part “a”.

Once students decide by themselves which is the most convenient way to apply they have to follow the entrance examination process in this first way to access.

Students will need to submit:

- a) Written investigation for applicant, about the books they read recently, the most interesting books ever and their experience to attend a lecture in university.
- b) Activity report, about their experience after entering in high school
- c) Evaluation report, self assessment report, from 1200 to 1600 words
- d) School report, academic grades

First applicants have to submit their reports point a and b and wait for the result, then the second step is an interview process. Students will be asked about their activity report. Applicants for College Liberal Arts are also asked about one of the two compulsory books that Oberlin requires to read. Furthermore applicants for College of Performing and Visual Arts are required to do a physical skill test.

Then student will be informed about their application. Once they are accepted they can attend a pre-university education courses. It is a volunteer activity. They are taught about the campus performance, they know about experience of others students who already went abroad and second or third year fellows share their experience and knowledge about the campus as well. They meet each other before the class starts and also some of their future professor. A curiosity was that is recommended by Oberlin that students wear their high school uniform in order to let the others know from where they come.

Table 5.2 Schedule for application process of Admission Office procedure

Period	Application deadline	1 ^o result	Interview	2 ^o result	Deadline for payment
First	Sep/4	Oct/7	Oct/14-19	Oct/24	Nov/5
Second	Nov/6	Dec/4	Dec/9-12/14	Dec/18	Jan/20
Third	2009/Jun	Jun/Beginning	Jul/4	Jul/10	2009/Jul

Source: Guidebook for Entrance Examination J.F. Oberlin University (2008) p.3

Admission Based on Recommendation *Suisen Nyugakusya Senbatsu*

Quota:

Table 5.3 Quota of enrollment through Recommendation Letter

COLLEGE	NUMBER OF STUDENTS
College Liberal Arts	266
College Business and Management	105
College of Health and Welfare	56
College of performing and Visual Art	69

Source: Guidebook for Entrance Examination J.F. Oberlin University (2008) p.13

In this way there are as well two ways to apply:

Recommendation by designated high school *Siteikou Suisen*. Requirements: Single application and recommendation by a principle²³ in designated high school.

Application open to public *Koubosei Suisen*,

Applicants need to be recommended by a principal then there are several categories:

Then once student has the recommendation letter they have to go through one of these two processes F or S

F means students took a general curriculum in high school while S means students took a specialist training courses²⁴ in high school. Then there are two options:

They are required to score 3.5 out of 5 on their grade point average, he or she has to be graduated or expected to graduate by March of the current year.

Students are required to take at least one of the qualifications, specified in the admission procedures by J.F. Oberlin University. The qualification are conducted by different institutions (see annex V)

The selection process with the students who choose this process follows as is described:

- I) Students who will apply for the College of Liberal arts, College of Business Administration and College of Health and Welfare are required to read a book assigned by J.F. Oberlin University and write a report about it. The length is from 1200 to 1600 words,
- II) Interview, the entire students of each college will take an interview by two interviewees, they will be asked about the reason of their application, their study plan after be accepted, the content of their application from, the book assigned and their report. It is writing in the information that the interview will take 10 minutes.

²³ Principle means the headmaster of the high school

²⁴ Courses on agriculture, commerce, industry.

III) Students who apply for College performing and Visual Art will face a physical skills test, depending of the specific program the test is changed:

Music program: interview and playing a piece of music by string instrument, a brass instrument, a percussion instrument or singing.

Dance program: interview like audition and dance base on a short choreography.

Theater program: interview like audition and making a play by group based on an assignment.

Visual program: two works of fine art and interview and presentation about their works.

Film program: appreciation of a cinema (15 to 30 min.), writing an essay about the movie 800 words (30 min.) and group interview.

Table 5.4 Schedule of admission process of Recommendation

Kind of High School	Application deadline	Interview/and physical test	Result	Deadline for payment
Designed in Tokyo	Nov/6	Nov/22	Nov/26	Dec/17
Designed out of Tokyo	Oct/9	Oct/25-Nov/1	Nov/6	Dec/17
No designed	Nov/6	Nov/15	Nov/20	Dec/17

Source: Guidebook for Entrance Examination J.F. Oberlin University (2008) p.5

Entrance Examination by Test *Itupan Nyuugakusya Senbatsu*

Quota:

Table 5.5 Quota of enrollment through Entrance Examination

COLLEGE	NUMBER OF STUDENTS
College Liberal Arts	247

College Business and Management	98
College of Health and Welfare	52
College of performing and Visual Art	40

Source: Guidebook for Entrance Examination J.F. Oberlin University (2008) p.13

The requirements for the candidates are the second condition in part "a" point 1, and take one of the options from the exam combination subject:

3 subjects: English I or II (100 max. score), Japanese and contemporary Japanese (100) and optional subject between (World History B, Politics and Economics, Mathematics I or II) (100).

2 subjects: English I or II (150), Japanese and contemporary Japanese (100)

2 subjects: Chinese (100), Japanese and contemporary Japanese (100)

2 subjects: English I or II with (100) and one of the following subject (Japanese and contemporary Japanese, World History B, Japanese History B, Politics and Economics, Mathematics I or II) (100)

1 subject: English I or II, reading and writing (150)

2 subjects: English I or II reading and writing (100) and Mathematics I or II (100)

2 subjects: English I or II (100) and Japanese and Contemporary Japanese (100)

2 subjects: English I or II reading and writing (100) and Japanese and Contemporary Japanese (100)

And the last one is based in one subject of the National Center University Entrance Examination (NCUEE) (100) plus B way.

J.F. Oberlin University will measure through an average system in order to be able to compare the different score base on different number of subject and different scales. Then they could select and publish who applicants pass the writing exam.

Applicants for College of Performing and Visual Art will have a physical skills test and exam choose by them in the first period. In the second period those student only have to face the H exam without the `physical skill test. Nevertheless student to apply for this college on the third period only will have to take a physical skill test without any writing exam.

The requirements through this procedure were: application form, school report (for those who need their qualifications), photocopy of certificate (language skills for aviation management).

Table 5.6 Schedule of admission process of Examination by Test

Period	Application deadline	Interview	Exam	Result	Deadline payment
1°	Jan/20m-21i ²⁵	Jan/30,31 ²⁶	Feb/1 to 2/5	Feb/10	Feb/17X,Mar/10X
2°	Feb/12m,i	-	Feb/20 ²⁷	Feb/26	Mar/10
3°	Feb/23m,2/26i	-	Mar/6 ²⁸	Mar/12	Mar/18

Source: Guidebook for Entrance Examination J.F. Oberlin University (2008) p.7

Entrance Examination by National Center University Entrance Examination Admission Center *Siken Riyō Nyūgakusya Senbatsu*

Quota:

Table 5.7 Quota of enrollment through NCUEE

COLLEGE	NUMBER OF STUDENTS
College Liberal Arts	95
College Business and Management	52

²⁵ m: application submit by mail

i: application submit by internet

²⁶ Interview in this procedure is only taken by aviation courses in Business and Management College, the application is only available in the first period

²⁷ Only the H way is available at this stage, as well as in third period

²⁸ Applicants for College of Performing and Visual Art at the second and third period do not need to take the physical skill test

College of Health and Welfare	20
College of performing and Visual Art	25

Source: Guidebook for Entrance Examination J.F. Oberlin University (2008) p.13

Students who have been taken the national test will be admitted by J.F. Oberlin University depending for which college they apply:

College Liberal Art: they will score over 450, foreign language was compulsory (until 250) and two other subjects chosen from the list (see annex VI). Graduates from specialist training courses in high school took the foreign language exam (until 150) and Japanese language (100) and one subject from the list (annex VI).

College of Business and Management: there are as well two modalities, first: three subjects were the maximum score was until 350: Foreign language (150), Japanese (100) and one elective subject from the list (100) see annex VI. The second one is those who are graduated from specialist training courses in high school. They scored until maximum of (550), they had foreign language (250), Japanese (200) and mathematics (100).

College of Health and Welfare: only one way which three subject and score maximum until 550: Foreign language (250), Japanese (200) and one elective subject from the list (100) see annex VI.

College of Performing and Visual Art: they had two subjects and the maximum score was until 250, where the foreign language had (150) and Japanese (100). They also had a physical skill test.

The requirement list was: application form, school report and the institution asked to NCUEE for the grades of the applicants.

Table 5.8 Schedule of admission process of Examination by National Center University Entrance Examination Admission Center

Period	Application by email	Application by internet	Announcement of the result	Deadline for payment
1°	Jan/7-16	Jan/13-16	Feb/10	Feb/17p, Mar/10i

2°	Jan/21- Feb/12	Feb/9-12	Feb/26	Mar/10
3°	Feb/23-26	Feb/27- Mar/2	Mar/12	Mar/18

Source: Guidebook for Entrance Examination J.F. Oberlin University (2008) p.8

Examination for International Student *Ryuugakusei Byuugakusya Tokubetsu senbatsu*

Quota:

The statistics presented from the last academic course 2009 about the enrollment through this way is defined just as “a few” to each college.

The requirement is to be a non-Japanese citizen and be over 18 years old. Plus person who finished 12 year’s school education in foreign country and has qualification for entering university or a persons who finished pre-university course if the educational system of the candidate is under 12 years or candidate have an international baccalaureate or a person admitted to have a equivalent to one of three point exposed before.

The requirements are: application form, essay about the books they read recently and their experience attending lectures in the university, activity report about experience entering in high school, evaluation report from high school, self assessment from 1200 to 1600 words, school report, certificate of Japanese language school and certificate of examination for Japanese University Admission for International students.

There are two procedures:

Which considers: the result of Examination for Japanese University Admission for International students, exams about Japanese and comprehensive subject, document review and interview.

Japanese exam and interview

Applicants for College of Performing and Visual Art are required to take a physical skill tests.

Table 5.9 Schedule for admission process of International Students

	Period	Application by email	Application by internet	Announcement of the result	Deadline for payment
a	1°	Dec/1-6	Oct/25	Oct/30	Nov/19p,Dec/17i
	2°	Dec/1-4	Jan/10	Jan/14	Feb/13
b	1°	Dec/1-6	Oct/25	Oct/30	Nov/19p,Dec/17i
a	3°	2009/Jun	Jul/4	Jul/10	2009/Jul

Source: Guidebook for Entrance Examination J.F. Oberlin University (2008) p.9

Special examination for mature students *Syakajin Nyuugakuysya Tokubetsu Sennbatsu*

Quota:

The statistics presented from the last academic course 2009 about the enrollment through this way is defined just as "a few" to each college.

The requirements are:

- A person who is over 23 years old on the 1st of April, on the current year and has experience as a working adult.
- A person who has Japanese citizen, permanent resident visa or long term resident visa.

And the second condition presented on access 1 part a.

The required documents are: application form, school report and report about the book assigned by J.F. Oberlin University.

The way of selection: Documents review (report about the book assigned by the institution, school report), interview by two interviewees who ask about the reasons for the application, study plan once applicant is admitted, contents of the application form, and questions about both report. Applicants who apply for College of Performing and Visual Art have to take a physical skill test.

Table 5.10 Schedule for admission process for Mature Student

Period	Application by mail	Application by internet	Announcement of the result	Deadline for payment
1°	Oct/1-6	Oct/25	Oct/30	Nov/19e, Dec/17i
2°	2009/Jun/Beginning	Jul/4	Jul/10	2009/Jul/End

Source: Guidebook for Entrance Examination J.F. Oberlin University (2008) p.10

Transfer Admission Test *Hennyuugakusya Sennbatsu*

Quota:

The statistics presented from the last academic course 2009 about the enrollment through this way is defined just as "a few" to each college.

Requirement documents are: application form, transcript, report for home's professor university, essay length 1500 words about the aims to be enrolled on J.F. Oberlin University it is called "report for research". For those who need qualifications they have to present the certificate.

Then there are specific requirement for each college:

College Liberal Art: certificate of foreign language (English (proficiency), French, German, Chinese)

College of Business Management: Score of TOEFL (IBT 34, CBT 103, PBT 413) or certificate of Test of Practical English Proficiency semi-2nd grade.

College of Performing and Visual Art: consultation for credit recognition, and physical skill test.

Table 5.11 Schedule for admission process for Transfers Admission Test

Period	Application	Examination	Announcement of the result	Deadline for payment
1°Tokyo	Oct/1-6	Oct/25	Oct/30	Nov/19
2° Local area	Oct/6-9	Oct/25- Nov/1	Nov/6	Nov/19e,Dec/17i

Source: Guidebook for Entrance Examination J.F. Oberlin University (2008) p.11

Who can apply to the institution through this way?

Students and international students who have completed the second year in university or a candidate, or a graduated Junior College or High Technical College, or graduated of a university, or a graduated of an advanced vocational school appointed by the Minister of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology.

Mature students have to fill one of the options above and present certificate of experience as a working adult for more than three years.

In the case of a recommendation by designated junior college it has to be in a single application.

In both kind of application (exposed above) students can present a prior consultation.

After going through all the different procedures, the analysis of the statistic data in 2008-09 is presented. The procedure which enrolls more students is "Admission Office" AO with 671, follows by way 2nd "Interview Test" with 506 enrolments. Both processes have the higher admission rate: 2.7 and 1.19 respectably. It has been assert out that those exams²⁹ are easier than others. Students, professor and staff believe that. However, although those procedures could seem more feasible for the students, J.F. Oberlin University is completely confident with the procedures. In order to apply through these two procedures student need to follow specific trial and fulfill precise requirements. It lets the institution know more about what kind of student they are. Institution is not only aware about their knowledge and skill to memorize. Institution's staff wants to know about their motivation, background, goals, family support and so on. It is the way Oberlin University has to adapt to the new environment. New student need more attention, and more individualize teaching and support from the institution staff (in the administration and teaching-learning process).

Moreover, it is important to say that the higher number of application is in the "Examination by Text". It could be strongly linked with Japanese culture. Although the first two procedures are considered easier, as it was said above, students feel more confident applying through writing exams.

After my fieldwork in this university, two reasons come to my mind: First, student have been training for all their academic life to take a writing exam, in order to get place in the best (public) institution possible. Then their communication skills, language politeness and probably their own confident have not been enough develop to trust it in this difficult time.

²⁹ Understanding exams as the whole selection process

The anonymous writing exam seems as the more convenience way. Going further, in the case of procedure 4, entrance examination through the NCUEE, students just need to pay the tuition fee and the institution will ask the NCUEE for their great in the exam and decide about their application. Through these two procedures, J.F. Oberlin University does not know anything about their candidates, in procedure 4 they even do not need to go to the university. They have the information about their knowledge but nothing else. In the current situation Oberlin wants to be selective and know deeply about their students.

Another worthy point to analyze is the schedule. Basically the most important fact is when the deadline of payment is set. First students have to pay for the entrance examination process. In the case of J.F. Oberlin University the price is 35.000 ¥ (261.309 Euros³⁰) for each procedure unless NCUEE (number 4) which the cost is 16.000 ¥. In the case of public universities students also pay tuition fees. Once students have been informed about their application by the institutions they have the mentioned deadline to pay their tuition fee. Sometimes these deadlines are before public or other private institutions announce their admission list. It is being a kind of race to compromise students through their payment. It was demanded and the customer office which still is dealing with. Nowadays institutions are considering the students point of view. Oberlin's policy does its approach to students needs though two different ways: first the establishment of the deadline payment is postpone to the end of March in order to give more time to the students to decide where they want to attend. And the second measure is to return the money back to the student whether they ask for it before April, after 1st of April the institution does not have the obligation to do it.

It is common in Japan that students apply to different institutions even when they have to pay for each application. Sometimes they use those exams as a training process to improve their skills. The reasons behind these several chances are: one is to be able to choose between those to accept them and the second is to make sure they will get a place. In case the selection process is not how the though and he or she fail in the university wished. They at least could get a place in other lower institution. However that is way institution offers different chances to apply, they do not want o lose customers in any way. Moreover if the policy of the institution do not let students more time to decide or they do

³⁰ 1 JPY = 0.00746597 EUR, 9/9/2009

not return the money from their fees, students are threat unfairly. It was one consequences of the marketization process in Japan between 70 and 80's, nowadays although still is not a law concerning with, institution considers more the students right, in same extent.

6 Data analyze

Data have been presented according with the research questions developed in chapter one moreover there is a room also to include themes that emerged during the data collection such as the quality matter. First an introduction and justification of the demanded reforms involved in the environmental and policy changes is discussed. An important factor that could not be missed is the effects of prestige in the institutional development on the access issue. The second part of the data analyze deals with the adaptation and development of the admission process in J.F. Oberlin University.

Firstly, an introduction of how access in Japanese higher education was affected by the admission design under government regulations. Then the discussion of how a private university, J.F. Oberlin University, is adapting to the external environment and policy changes on access concern. How the design of the procedures is adapted from the policy regulation to the specific environment and need. Through implementing its policy admission procedures institutions look for assure the best students possible. In this process what was found out was that the quality matter is strongly related with the application rate and then with the enrollment students, the aim of any admission policy.

6.1 Introduction

Introduction and justification of the demand's reform

Following World War II Japan developed a very unique approach to education in modern society. The increasing number of applications was the consequence of the baby boom. Most of the institutions were able to recruit enough students without significant efforts. Students were guided their choices according to ranking and institution's hierarchical position without considering the curriculum features. Consequently, the admission process was based upon an extremely tough competition between students with regard to passing the entrance exam and gaining entry to one of the most prestigious universities they could access. Students spent their whole childhoods thinking and

struggling for a place in the institution they have dreamt about (Muta, 2000:146). Shimizu Izuo, the chancellor of Oberlin University, comment:

"Japanese universities are now in a golden age. With the large numbers of students seeking admission, universities have nothing to worry about now" then add "institution had little incentive to change " (Regur 1991:31 in Doyon, 2000:446).

The pressure was clearly on the student side. They struggled and competed in order to secure their futures. At the same time institutions just needed to wait and select the best students to increase their prestige through difficult exams in the application process.

At this stage, the quality assurance was something that was far from the consideration of the institutions and society. Nevertheless, student quality was assured by the high demand for prestigious institutions. Therefore this goal made the students work hard before they gained access to higher education. Thus, students were spread out in different institutions depending on their test score. Students carried out the whole responsibility. However this situation has shifted considerably in different perspective in the last two decades. Medium and low level institutions, which proliferated a lot, started to suffer to attract enough students. It contributed to press government to develop an education reform (Doyon, 2001:446). Moreover, universities were facing different problems. The lack of student and their wider variety, the social pressure to achieve a new system which allows students to enjoy their childhoods and the low university reputations becomes a matter of concern. As a result, Nakasone's reform was centered on deregulation and maintained that:

It is possible to argue that the cornerstone of the Nakasone led reforms centered on notions of deregulation for the Council maintained that the emphasis on competition should be the schools and universities rather than between individual students attempting to gain entrance to these institutions. (Wada, 2007:214).

With in this context J.F. Oberlin University developed its own admission process. In the first part of the data analyse the discussion of the institutional changes in Oberlin University admission policy under the governmental and social influences is presented.

6.2 Discussion of governmental control in the admission policy

Government has been cutting down its financial support and giving more autonomy to the higher education institutions giving them more freedom to take their own decisions. These political initiatives translated and increase competition between institutions, stimulating the emergence of different strategies to success and survive. The actors interviewed recognize the great autonomy institutions have to take their decision concerning admission policy.

The government does not give strict rules to design the admission policy. It is nearly up to the school. Some schools are good only in one subject. Government is only interested in whether the entrance examination is fair or not. For instance they check if only one person decide the admission procedure... () We have to announce the admission list, the possible changes in the schedule. Any change in the admission procedures have to be reported to the ministry (President Satow, 2009).

There is no doubt about the autonomy institutions have to design their admission process. However this freedom and autonomy, particularly in admission policies, raised a discussion concerning the quality of each procedure and consequently a way to judge the value of the institutions. This quality assurance is an important factor in the policy admission among others institutional competences. University evaluation in Japan is a combination of self-monitoring and external evaluation. After 1990 reform aimed to move from quantitative to qualitative development. University governance got many domains such as research, management, staff development, curriculum and admission policies (Shimizu, 2000:51).

Interviewees claim that the increasing higher education institutions autonomy resulted in the emergence of a need for new regulation models and processes in which quality assessment and evaluation is also included. The next quotation is an example of this perception:

The government always tend its mind to keep enough space of higher education but also its concern about the quality so far, until 3 or 4 years ago, we do not have the system of accreditation, in other words no peer review, no government review, each university has very strong autonomy rights to education by themselves. No control from outside. That was possible until only 25, 30% of the same age population come to the university. But now 50%, or more than 50%, of the same population take part of the higher education. (President Satow, 2009).

Related with the autonomy of the private institutions in order to assess their evaluation process and other matter such admission policy, there are different points to consider. Basically private institutions have been under the control of the Ministry of Education, despite their autonomous status. The key point is to understand where this Ministry control has been focused on, the legislation process is the main matter. The establishment of Universities and their expansion is defined by specific rules. Universities need to accomplish government rules in issues such as degree requirement of academic staff, number of teachers, number of books in the library, number the students, just to name the most important. This policy has been giving up in some extents (qualify teachers or academic staff control) thus the strict control has turned softer. Once institutions are opened they have considerable freedom to manage. This laissez-faire policy toward private institution has bought the quality problems (Maruyama, 2008:12). Thus, the quality assurance, after their establishment, has been faced through the evaluation system.

There was not accreditation system but there was evaluation system, three different agencies whit out the governmental control evaluate each institution each seven years. () the government has a screening control on the size of each institution. Also the government is very strict to screening of studying any program in Japan (President Satow, 2009).

In Japan the accreditation was not established as the American model suggests. It has taken an evaluation orientation influence by the credential Japanese society. Japanese private institutions are facing different problems to cope with the quality requirement, which is extremely related with the society assessment. Institutions are forced to safe these matter to be succeed. In private institutions the most common trouble to pass the external evaluation is not the quality of education; the problem is more related with the poorness in management administration procedures and lack of students (President Satow).

Each university has its own system; some schools are not ready to go through all the evaluation process. The major reason is not to pass the evaluation. The major problem is administrative, no academic, nor teaching but rather the management and not enough number of students (President Satow, 2009)

... () 12 to 13% of the total expenditure is paid by the government funding. I felt to recruit enough number of students; it cut down the funding (President Satow, 2009).

Under the influence of American model, the need of accreditation was the main purpose in order to show how worthy the institution is. Moreover, the UK influence,

involved the assessment of teaching and research which is linked with funding support. Then Japanese government took place and developed strong competition in the privatization era between public and private institutions with the aim to improve the quality thus they would get more funding from the government and better social recognition (Shimizu, 2000:52).

One of these external evaluation agencies is JUAA, Japanese University Accreditation Association. JUAA's position is defining by two kinds of evaluation processes, self-monitoring and external evaluation. While each institutions evaluate itself according to the JUAA's format, the external evaluation process is run by a peer review implemented by JUAA national perspective with more comparable factors involve in the education process (Shimizu, 2000:53). A clear and understandable evaluation process was needed to be designed due to the quality matter affects the social recognition with strongly linked with the attractiveness of the students and with the government funding policy.

Private institutions in Japan have been very autonomous. They did not have any kind of external accreditation agencies or peer review. The lack of external control could be related with the elite higher education system always located in the public sector. However, the shift in the modern time has been done in the private sector which was entrusted to absorb the increase demand then it brought the problem of the quality in higher education. Thus the private sector did not expand in order to keep the high standards and quality. However, once the massification and post-massification took place the need of quality and control was demanded by the society and the government. It has a strong impact in the admission procedures design. Admission was running by the institutions with the freedom to select students and design the most convenient procedures. Private institutions analyse the new student features and demands, they steering the process looking for adapting and facilitating student applications and enrolment. The core of the admission process was shifted to the students need rather than the academic standards. Institutions were forced to search for the acceptable number of students in order to run the university. That is why the increase facilities made the academic level in medium-low level private institutions decrease. In this way the quality matter shifts to be a priority concern for institutions.

The question is how each school can make their quality? We used to have only 10% of the 18's age population getting admission in higher education institutions, they were the top students (President Satow, 2009).

The evaluation process could be related with the government funding support. In order to get more funding from the state, even private institutions are focusing on the quality of their programs forwards community services, student funding (scholarship), internationalization and research projects. Nowadays the supply exceeds demand in the market is on the side of student with low quality and basic knowledge to be enrolled. The external evaluation is needed to assure the quality education for students under the changeable environment.

When circumstances changed due to the economic recession, the lost of trust in tertiary education, decreasing of traditional college-age youth and wider variety of students thus the influence of the international trend an education policy reform was demanded. It brought two major changes in the admission process in Japanese higher education: the role of entrance examination and the remedial education (Mori, 2002:27).

Entrance examination was softening, by the design of each institution and according with their requirement, institutions developed their admission procedures to attract the best students they can. The remedial education was one of the measures adapted to qualify those students who have some weakness or difficulties on their academic curriculum, once they have been enrolled.

I would say only top 12-20% of the student they don't need to take remedial education courses, they have enough background and they test out. (President Satow, 2009).

Both issues are strongly related with the hierarchical level of the institutions. Entrance examination became a process where gather useful information to select the best students instead to be a qualifying process to recruit the most clever applicants.

... () each university has its own system. The question we have is how we measure the student faculty preparation? (President Sato, 2009).

Before the reforms the writing exam, as an only procedure, assured an equal instrument to measure all the applicants. Despite each institution developed their own exam and looked for the knowledge they considered enough to fulfill those studies, the system was considered easier to implement. Institutions had their autonomy and accountability to the outcomes of the process regarding with the aim to increase the prestige. By this time

universities never considered the students features or needs, there was abundance of applicants so institutions could easily select based on the student competition. From this point, the environment changed significantly. Nakasone's reform and following came to adjust the social and political demands to the university reality. Decreasing population, over representativeness of the institutions, new student features, decreasing institutional quality and so on were dealt with local and national government, industry, society and students in order to adapt the system. New admission policies were developed; institutions used their freedom to settle into the environment. New procedures, more changes, more flexibility and individualization, different test and exams to sum up the competition for students among institutions let a wide variety of admission policies. The implementation and success of each one depends on the goals and the facilities which institutions have.

Those external factors are getting worst, the competition is continuously increased moreover institutions need to be update for coming changes and new factors. Some others factors are location or institutional side. In the case of J.F. Oberlin University nowadays both are considered positive, thus they are struggling to keep and improve them.

Situation will get worst, but we are in a better position than others universities in different areas because we are located in Tokyo. It is a very important point. Many students would like to study in Tokyo. Also the side of the university is very important. Universities with more than 10.000 students are doing ok, and are considered high selected. On the other hand universities with less than this population are not being considered enough selective (Head of the Admission Office, 2009).

6.3 Implementation of J.F. Oberlin policy access

As it has been sustained, private institutions have enough autonomy from the state to design and implement their admission policy to attract students in the competitive market. Therefore one of their main concern is to show up to the society their quality and good performance. It is assumed that a social recognition and prestigious institutions assure enough applications and then, by the way, avoids admission difficulties, financial problems and future survival. In order to regulate the institutions affairs different agencies³¹ were

³¹ NIAD-UE, JUAA

built up and government started to set up evaluation mechanisms to assure institution's quality which will shift to a lure.

What we want is to have enough applicants (Head of the Admission Office, 2009).

Institutions have total autonomy to define admission processes and this is clearly evidenced by the general character of the guideless assumed by JUAA to institutions concerning admission policy and practice:

(1) The basic rules and guidelines for admission must reflect the university's mission and objectives.

(2) There must be a system or mechanism to check the validity of ongoing admission policies. There are two key questions to be answered: Is it fair for all students? Is it right for the university?

(3) The maximum and optimum student enrollment capacity guidelines are to be observed. For example, the JUAA's standards state that the number of students enrolled must not exceed 130% of capacity which is set for humanities and 110% for science departments (Shimizu, 2000:55).

J.F. Oberlin University has been working hard to develop its admission process, being Admission Office its leadership. Institutions have the freedom to design the process and requirements to achieve a highly selection process with the aim to get the most applications possible. Students can apply through different procedures. Each student is free to choose the most convenience procedure for him/her. J.F. Oberlin University defines its schedule, examination process (interviews, essays, writing exams...) and notifies the government whenever there is any change in the program. The major government concern is to assure equity to everyone in the application process, being the fairness in the selection process is its bigger worry. Once the selection is done, universities have to report to the state the enrolled students. To achieve an equalitarian process, different staff, normally three people, evaluate each application in order to select the best candidates (President Satow, 2009).

We have many admission procedures inside the institution. The government requires establishing the admission policy, curriculum policy and graduation policy. The end of the admission policy, the goal is to overcome the difficulty since the 18's population decreasing dramatically and the total capacity of the open freshmen is almost equal to the number of students. Strong schools get more applicants, weak schools struggle to get enough number of applicants (President Satow, 2009).

The institution's goal is to have as much applicants as it can. Furthermore J.F. Oberlin University keeps the wish to be more selective. It was a really important point in the

admission process. While the system is designed to facilitate student application with different periods, seven different procedures and in some cases decreasing selective requirement, the institution wants to improve its prestige and student population quality. The higher quality of the students and their chances to success in the labor market will have an effect in the recognition and university prestige, being those two aspects basic elements to the future development of any institutions. Those factors have been motivated the staff and professors to work harder, opening new fields of teaching such as the music and plastic art departments in Performing and Visual Art College or aviation training in Business and Management College (Head of Admission Office, 2009).

Nowadays J.F. Oberlin University is well known and in this tough competition for students where some universities have already bankrupted, Oberlin is doing well. In the last years Oberlin has been keeping the number of applicants and the number of enrollment. However it is known that in the next seven or eight years the graduated high school population will decrease again and then sharp troubles will have to be faced³². To face this coming problem, Oberlin policy makers are working hard in order to improve as much as they can their social recognition. It is based in a high quality teaching-learning process and selecting the best students they can. The selection of the staff either teacher or administrative is highly selective. The facilities and remedial education encourages and helps students in their transition from high school to their university life (Head of Admission Office, 2009).

For these years the number of students is stable, we are doing a good job. So right now we are not facing a big problem but in the future I think in 6 or 7 years the 18's ages population will decrease again. By that time many institutions will face serious problems (Head of the Admission Office, 2009).

Whilst the theory of how the procedures work has been presented in chapter 5, in the present section the discussion on the implementation and the aims of these procedures is presented through the analysis of the information gathered in the interview to the Head of the Admission Office.

The original idea to compare different procedures to select students in order to have a clear understanding of each one was quickly given up. To compare different procedures was something difficult and almost unfeasible. The main idea behind each procedure is

³² This fear is shared by all the interviewees.

provide an individual approach forwards different circumstances and abilities to be able to measure the skills of the applicants in the most positive and adaptive way. Students are different, each one has his/her own system to learn, different background, motivation and aims all those factors demand new institutional admission policies. If it is not possible to compare individuals how would be possible, in this case, to compare the system to measure their qualities, motivations and aims? This would be difficult and inappropriate (Head of Admission Office, 2009). The aim of the admission policy is to select the best student and give every facility in the application process.

Institution looks for the quality and the number of the applicants (Head of the Admission Office, 2009)

The first and most successful procedure in this institution is the AO (Admission Office). It is the most unique and reflect the institutions character and mission. However this AO idea is widely established either in private as in public institutions. The differences and complexities in each institution design makes possible the flexibility and selectivity of each university. AO becomes the leadership of the admission process in J.F. Oberlin University. It gives a deeper knowledge about the applicants and provides the chance to achieve an effective selection process. The quality of the process is based in the institution experience and its mission and objectives.

Our admission office shows the leadership of screening. We read and check the total background of the students (high school document, essay, interviews) more than three staff are involve in each enrollment. ... () that system of applications becomes an evaluative process (President Satow, 2009).

Procedure two, the letter recommendation is based on two kind of high school recommendation letter. The status of designated schools gives really high guaranties to be admitted (rate 1,19). Designated criteria to select those schools are based on location³³ of the school, number of applications in previous years, former graduate students from this institution, mock ranking³⁴. Moreover the high school policy is an important factor as well. Some high schools do not encourage this procedure to their students whilst others accept and promote it. Another requirement for those who belong to these designated high schools is the exclusivity to this university application process. This means not everyone can choose this process, there is a previous selection from the high school to allow students

³³ Oberlin University has special interest to attract students from other prefectures.

³⁴ Unofficial ranking from cram schools to set up the hierarchy of junior high, high school and universities

to take this procedure and this can justify the high admission rate showed above. It concerns with the high school policy about this procedure, the tradition of each institution and their own philosophy influence on attitude forwards this procedure (Head of Admission Office, 2009).

The question is how we get the correct data on the students? We have to trust the academic transcript... () some of the schools are in relation for many years, we know each other (President Satow, 2009)

We nominated the high schools, basically all the applicants will be admitted. Once they got the recommendation letter in a designated school (Head of the Admission Office, 2009).

Maybe because the condition of 3.5 GPA is high and also it is up to the high school. Some high schools could like to have more students to challenge the national entrance examination however some private high schools look for more recommendation letter (Head of the Admission Office, 2009).

Being aware to avoid pre-assumptions about specific themes was impossible to deny the question related with the possible low quality of students admitted by this procedure. The requirement to score 3.5 in their average high school grades plus the recommendation itself by the principal presents enough evidence to ensure the quality of those students. Moreover, the assumption was not accurate. Those students are doing well even better than students who belong to procedure of NCUEE with *a priori* (assumption again) should do better.

The recommendation letter is considered such a guarantee, each school struggle to make a recognize higher education recommendation (President Satow, 2009).

Nevertheless, the president of the university commented that in the fourth procedure students do better in the first year but then their grades are going down while second procedure's students improve during the whole academic process. The real value of admission letter procedure is that students are showing they already have a good level with their average grade (over 3.5) and the thrust of their principal (director of the high school), while students who take others procedures they still have to show up their skills (Head of the Admission Office, 2009).

The quality of the students is much different, independent from which procedure the come. However student from designated school are doing better than any others. NCEE's students are doing well the first year but then their grades decrease (Head of the Admission Office, 2009).

Procedure 3 and 4: Oberlin test and NCEE

Oberlin university test gives the students the chance to choose between taking 1, 2 or 3 exams with multiply combinations of subjects³⁵. The university calculates the average of the different scores depending on the number of exams taken and come up with a final grade which makes possible to rank the applications score and then select the best students. It is important to say that the minimum score to be selected depends on either the average quality of the students and on the number of applications. This fact deserves more attention.

Briefly, it just is aware of how higher education institutions, in a competitive setting, depend highly on the environment. J.F. Oberlin University has the wish and aim to be more selective in order to get the best students possible this seems to be contested by the admission procedures that seem to be develop in such a way as to allow every students who wish to be enrolled. That is why the search for prestige in a credential society is a key issue (Head of Admission Office, 2009).

The following step under this dependence of the high school "production" is the Remedial Education. Educational policy reform has focused on it, and delivered the responsibilities to the institutions affairs, as Mori (2002:39) confirms:

Each college and university is required to aid high school students... These steps are needed for the sake of students' smooth transition from high schools to colleges and universities" (Mori, 2002:39).

Concerning with the deadline payment J.F. Oberlin University has a policy to return the money to those students who have changed their mind before the end of March after that time they cannot get their money back. Moreover the policy sets up the payment in procedures 3 and 4 at mid March, in order to give more time to those students who apply for other institutions and, at the same time, to those who in the last chance want to join the University. Related with other procedures the payment has been done months ago, mostly in December or January. In these cases, the situation is different for those students who apply exclusively to this institution or the set of their choices are narrower (Head of Admission Office, 2009).

³⁵ See annex VI

When looking at the future, the scenario is not very optimistic, more troubles will come. That is why nowadays J.F. Oberlin University is doing the best to set up a better reputation. Concerning with the access procedures, changes will be taken. The aim is to be more selective, through more exhaustive processes. It could be suggested that the procedures which involve exams could disappear. Oberlin wants to focus on AO and probably recommendation letter. Those procedures let them to know more about the applicants, their motivation, aims and qualities. They are aware that the selection process is linked with the prestige role. They are focusing on their own AO system in order to be more successful. In addition they look for a closer relationship between student and institution and the fact that the application through NCEE is not required to come to the institution due to it is done by posting the grade. And the lack of interview on test exam makes those procedures lose effectiveness under Oberlin's perspective (Head of Admission Office, 2009). They want to have the student in the campus that is why the promotion of former student net and the "open campus" where student have the chance to visit the university.

We have to think about the selection process, we may have to change the selection process. I am not sure how long we can use the writing exam; we will not have enough population.

So in that sense, this kind of exam is just to select students. But there is one reason why we think that AO is very important for us. We can read every aspect of prospective students to admit, it is not just selective. We can look into how they want to study here, how strong they would like to be a member of the university. We can reach many aspects of the students. That is very important for us and that will be more important (Head of the Admission Office, 2009).

Another measure implement in all the procedures (unless pilot program) is the three period to apply. It is designed to give more facilities for students to apply. Students may aim to other more prestigious institutions and take difficult exams that they do not score enough. Then once they are not selective by those other universities it is important to J.F. Oberlin University to give them a chance to apply for it. These several periods to apply increase the student facilities and then the attractiveness chances.

Basically we will like to have enough opportunities for the students to take the exam. The third period is for the students who have not been accepted by other universities, mostly public institutions (Head of Admission Office, 2009).

Based on these procedures and the features of each one, it could be said that J.F. Oberlin University is doing its best to consider all the external and internal factors to be success on the enrolment matter. Different procedures are designed to different kind of students, trying to fulfill all the social demands presenting on each student, with his/her specification and needs. An individualize admission policy somehow is the goal for J.F. Oberlin University. Concerning with the high difficulties to attract students and considering all the factors involved in the admission process, different procedures are trying to answer to the demands. Admission Office is leading an effective admission policy which encourages the deep knowledge of each applicant and goes deeper on the reasons and aims of the student. The admission institutional policy has been designed to assure and increase the number of students in the following years, where a tougher environment is expected. It will guarantee selective students who fulfill their goals and the institutions as well.

7 Conclusions

7.1 Conclusions of the research

In the process of Japanese higher education reform 1980-1990 Nakasone and Koizumi cabinets set up the measures of the current policy (Ogawa, 2002:85). Under the pressure of the 21st century, the isolated background of Japanese higher education forward international community and the modern Japanese society has been pushing higher education to constant update movements in order to answer the new needs. New agents appeared reshaping the relationship and distribution of power. State could not support the growth of public higher education institutions. At the same time public system were completely insufficient to fulfill the increase demand in the post-massification process (Maassen & Cloete, 2006:10). As a consequence the private system grew and took a strong position in the education field. The privatization and deregulation (Koizumi and Nakasone's contribution) steered forward to the marketization in the higher education system where the reputation was a key factor. Afterward the decreasing population issue dramatically shaped the national environment. It affected the whole higher education system and both public and private took measures to face the hostile situation. In Japan, the traditional accreditation society demanded the institution to increase their reputation and score a high rank in the population belief. The hierarchical system was really deciding. Changes have been taking place on the university life. Policy admission processes have been adapted to the shift of pressures and institutions have developed their own measures. The implementation has taken different direction depending of the wide spectrum among universities about their objectives, reputation, hierarchy and side (Ogawa, 2002:85).

The J.F. Oberlin admission policy was developed from the governmental policy based on institutional orientation and with the freedom to apply its own objectives. The traditional condition still present and the new roles, agents and needs forced institutions to find their way to survive in an extremely competitive sector. J.F. Oberlin University has been taken as a case study of an up-middle rank private university located in Tokyo area. It helped to set up the real problem and analyze the strategies they are defining to face

external pressures. Through the following research questions this master thesis has tried to answer the research problem mentioned in chapter 1:

How changes in higher education environment and, more specifically, on national regulations over access, affect private institutions access policies?

To conduct the study the following research questions were used:

1. How are private universities reacting to the new external environment and policy regulations over students' access to higher education?

2. How do changes in institutional environment and policy regulations affect private institutions policies over access?

3. Which methods do private universities (J.F. Oberlin University) use to select "the best" students?

In the current situation universities are getting more independent and free from the government (increased institutional autonomy), but this, in turn, also it makes them have to be more accountable. The need to compete and survive with limited governmental support and new powerful stakeholders made the institutions change their strategies.

Universities are struggling to achieve the best improvement on their management to secure their future. The admission process plays an important factor on the success of the institution. J.F. Oberlin University develops different admission process in order to attend the different needs. They aim to be as selective as possible, it steers the process to top students with high skills and mature develop. However the fact that the 18 year old population is decreasing and the priority of those student for institutions which rank in a better position force the medium-low level institutions to try to attract students on a wider margin of requirements (less demanding). The lack of students makes the institutions bring down their prerequisites. J. F. Oberlin University is developing a system which allows them to be more open to a wider spectrum of students. But their concerns with prestige make them, simultaneously, want to know more about their candidates and try to select the promising ones. They want to know their reason for deciding to study there, why they choose their university, how much they want to be accepted. They try to measure the maturity and awareness of their future students.

The selection process has an important consequence on the university's overall development. On the one hand, the more selective and the more applications the institution has it increases its prestige in the university ranking and this in turn encourages futures students to apply and choose the institution. On the other hand, the institution looks for the best graduates it can produce. These students will represent the institution in the labor market and in the society and demonstrate how good its education is incentivizing. In this way, other students that choose the institution and get better jobs in the future. To achieve this purpose admission procedures are represented and managed by Admission Office (AO). This office wants to represent and achieve the following idea of education in J.F. Oberlin University:

Education at J. F. Oberlin is defined not in a narrow sense such as merely filling the mind with knowledge and facts, but in a broader sense of developing the whole individual both mentally and spiritually. The ideal education should provide a rich and wide range of knowledge and foster the ability to make decisions and distinguish right from wrong³⁶.

A personal and individual treatment is delivered by all the staff to the students, considering the social and familiar environment and taking into account the individual skills.

Oberlin University has been using its autonomy on admission process to develop a structured admission system. The seven different procedures with the three different periods to apply are designed to be the most selective possible and also to try to give the most amount of facilities to the student's in their application process. The variety of the procedures designed, their flexibility and their feasibility make the admission process closer to the social demands.

One of the main changes is about the idea of difficult exams studying by heart. Medium-low level institution search for alternative way to select student then the high competition between students has already gone. These difficult exams are decreasing due to medium-low level hierarchical institutions do not try to measure only their knowledge, they try to go further and analyze all their skills and motivations. Thus the quality of the students is getting low and the prestige of the institutions is lost. The balance between the higher prestige possible and a sufficient number of students enrolled is the challenge of any

³⁶ (Webpage J.F. Oberlin University, 2009)

admission process. Nevertheless it is needed to clarify when and where these difficult exams are still working. This tough competition to score a high grade in the exam is still working on prestigious institutions where the number of applicants is high. The best students are eager to attend the best institutions connoisseurs of the positive advantages and their selection process has to be different from those institutions which are struggling to attract students. Nevertheless top universities are also using the new selective and individual processes trying to be fairer to all kind of student intelligence.

The quality issue is highly connected with the recognition affair. Institutional policy works to develop and assure that all the procedures are satisfactorily achieved and fulfill the institutions and social needs. The number of applications is spread out to the different procedures. Quality is an important matter in order to attract potential candidates. Oberlin University is really concern about the quality of its programs, the quality of its professors, the international co-operation with well known institutions and its recognition, the social needs at national and local level and any other issue which could improve its prestige. With their internal evaluation and the external evaluation by national and private agencies J.F. Oberlin University tries to show what its real quality is.

7.2 Limitations of the study

This thesis has approached an unexplored subject by a foreign student with restricted theoretical perspective and background in order to understand all the circumstances and then analyze the case. The main consequences were the limitations to generalize to other institutions and also the important difficulties to understand deeply how the processes at different levels work. Despite this, the strategy adopted, based on a unique case study helped to analyze the topic and bring down the national policy to the institutional field.

The biggest challenges met while making this thesis was to try to fully understand how Japanese system works and then also enormous difficulties in gathering the empirical data due to the cultural and languages differences and also with logistical issues like finding students available during their holiday period (from beginning of February to beginning of May).

Another challenge was to merge different agent's ideas in a complicated context such as Japanese society where social rules influence individuals, context and clearly admission procedures.

The limitations were related to the single case study selected, the nature of foreign researcher with a short period of time to understand some complex issues in Japanese society and in some cases the difficulty to understand the official language, mostly in order to read institutional brochures.

The population in the admission process study was formed by Japanese citizens who study in Japan or Japanese who studied abroad³⁷ and foreigners already enrolled in Japanese educational system that could show enough languages skill competences in Japanese and were allowed to stay in Japan with a resident permit. The limitation in this sense was that there was no classification or categorization for those students who fulfilled the requirements to apply for undergraduate level.

Another limitation is related with the design of the thesis, being a case study of one institution makes it impossible to generalize or present a theory. The specific environment analyzed played an important role.

Related with the data sources, main brochures and some relevant information in the webpage of the university about access were in Japanese. Since Japanese was not a requirement for the master program the need for a translation, with all consequences it had, was required. The translation was done by unofficial sources.

Being a foreigner could be to some extent a kind of limitation, as for example in understanding some behavior or the correct procedure in specific circumstances such as interviews or other issues in the daily life. However under the experience during this fieldwork process and all the facilities from professors and staff it should not have a significant weight moreover in some cases it could even be an advantage.

Other limitations faced were the difficulties to reach all the interviewee selected due to their busy schedules at that time of the academic year.

³⁷ In those countries where the education system is recognize in Japan

7.3 Ideas for further research

Given the explorative features of this thesis through the institution approach under the influences of the policy reforms, many doors could be opened to future research. With this in mind, some suggestion and ideas are highlighted below.

For instance, a future project should analyze other institutions, carry out a comparative study between different institutions. Choosing institutions with different features such as size, prestige level, internationalization concerns, public or private thus see which procedures are more successful. It is strongly recommended to use more than one institution to analyze the real environment and possible chances.

It could be also interesting to consider deeply the students point of view. As the society is changing fast the values and worries of the population change. Dealing with potential higher education students mean we are talking about still teenagers. It is widely known how superficial and easy to influence they can be. It does not mean all are alike that, that is why to go deeper in their concerns should be extremely interesting.

Finally, it is suggested to use a quantitative approach to measure and analyze the efficiency of procedure considering the cost, time and others possible variables. It would be interesting to know which procedures select the best future graduated students.

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Annex

Annex I

J. F. Oberlin University Academic Calendar 2008-2009

Spring Semester

Apr. 3-9 (Thu-Wed)	Orientation and placement test for Japanese classes
Apr. 15 (Thu)	Classes begin
May 29 (Mon)	J. F. Oberlin Foundation Day (No classes)
Jun. 21-22 (Sat-Sun)	Ashinoko International Camp
Jul. 31 (Thu)	Last day of classes

Autumn Semester

Sep. 10-16 (Wed-Tue)	Orientation and placement test for Japanese classes (Tentative)
Sep. 22 (Mon)	Classes begin
Oct. 16 (Thu)	Sports and Health Fair (no class)
Oct. 25-26 (Sat-Sun)	Yamanakako International Camp
Oct. 31 - Nov. 3 (Fri-Mon)	School Festival
Dec. 22 (Mon)	Last day of classes before vacation
Jan. 8 (Thu)	Classes resume
Jan. 29 (Thu)	Last day of classes

J. F. Oberlin University Academic Calendar 2009-2010

Spring Semester

Apr. 1-10 (Wed.-Fri.)	Orientation and placement test for Japanese classes
Apr. 13 (Mon.)	Classes begin
May 29 (Mon)	J. F. Oberlin Foundation Day (classes held as usual)
TBA	Ashinoko International Camp
Jul. 29 (Wed.)	Last day of classes
Jul. 30- Aug. 5 (Thu.-Wed.)	Make-up classes

* Classes are held on the following national holidays: Apr. 29, Jul. 20.

Autumn Semester

Sep. 7-18 (Mon.-Fri.)	Orientation and placement test for Japanese classes (Tentative)
Sep. 21 (Mon.)	Classes begin

Oct. 17-18 (Sat.-Sun.)	Yamanakako International Camp
Oct. 29 - Nov. 1 (Thu.-Sun.)	School Festival (no classes)
Dec. 24 (Thu.)	Last day of classes before vacation
Jan. 8 (Fri.)	Classes resume
Jan. 22 (Fri.)	Last day of classes
Jan. 25-29 (Mon.-Fri.)	Make-up classes

* Classes are conducted on the following national holidays: Sep. 21, Sep. 22, Sep. 23, Oct. 12, Nov. 23.

Annex II

Academics

J. F. Oberlin University	College of Liberal Arts	
	College of Performing and Visual Arts	Theatre and Dance Program
		Music Program
		Visual Arts Program
		Film Studies Program
	College of Business Management	Department of Business Management
		Global Business Program
		Distribution and Marketing Program
		Information Technology and Business Management Program
		Tourism, Hotel and Entertainment Management Program
		Department of Aviation Management
		Airline Business Program
		Airline Hospitality Program
		Flight Operations Program
	College of Health and Welfare	Health Science Program
		Psychiatric Social Work Program
		Social Welfare Program
		Childcare Services Program
	University College of Cornerstone Education	
	Teaching Training Center	
	College of Humanities	Department of English *1
		Department of Chinese *1
		Department of Languages and Information Studies *1

		Department of Psychology, Health and Sports Science *2
		Department of Arts and Culture Studies *2
College of Economics		Department of Economics *1
College of International Studies		Department of International Studies *1
College of Business and Public Administration		Department of Business Management *2
Graduate	Graduate School of International Studies	International Studies
		International Relations
		Pacific Rim Culture Studies
		Foreign Language Instruction
		Human Sciences
		Gerontology *2
		Higher Education Administration *2
		Higher Education Administration (Correspondence Course) *2
	Graduate School of Gerontology	Gerontology
	Graduate School of Higher Education Administration	Higher Education Administration
		Higher Education Administration (Correspondence Course)
Comprehensive Research Organization	Research and Development	Institute for Industrial Research
		Institute for International Studies
		Institute for Higher Education Research and Development
		Institute of Aging and Human Development
		Institute for Language Education Research and

			Development
			Institute for Northeast Asian Studies
			Institute for Health, Psychology and Welfare
			Institute for Church Music
		Affiliated Centers	Institute for the Performing Arts
			Center for Clinical Psychology
			Advanced Learning Support Development Research Center
		Center for Sports Health Science	
		Institute for Japanese Language and Culture (Extension for International Students)	
		Confucius Institute at J. F. Oberlin University (Special Course in Chinese Language)	

*1 End of recruiting for new students

*2 End of recruiting

J. F. Oberlin High School

J. F. Oberlin Junior High School

J. F. Oberlin Kindergarten

Annex III

UNDERGRADUATE SCHOOL

COLLEGE OF LIBERAL ARTS	
COLLEGE OF PERFORMING AND VISUAL ARTS	Theater and Dance Program
	Music Program
	Visual Arts Program
	Film Studies Program
COLLEGE OF BUSINESS MANAGEMENT	Global Business Program
	Distribution and Marketing Program
	Information Technology and Business Management Program
	Tourism, Hotel and Entertainment Management Program
	Airline Business Program
	Airline Hospitality Program
	Flight Operations Program
COLLEGE OF HEALTH AND WELFARE	Health Science Program
	Psychiatric Social Work Program
	Social Welfare Program
	Childcare Services Program

Annex IV

J. F. Oberlin University Graduate Division, M. A. Program

Graduate Program of International Studies	Master Program in International Studies	International Relations
		Regional Cultures
		International Cooperation
		Management
	Master Program in Language Education	Japanese as a Second Language
		English as a Foreign Language
	Master Program in Human Sciences	Clinical Psychology
		Health Psychology
Graduate Program of Higher Education Administration	Master Program in Higher Education Administration	On-Campus Course
		Correspondence Course
Graduate Program in Gerontology	Master Program in Gerontology	

J. F. Oberlin University Graduate Division, Ph.D. Program

Graduate Program of International Studies	Ph. D. Program in International Relations
	Ph. D. Program in Pacific Rim Culture Studies
Graduate Program in Gerontology	Ph. D. Program in Gerontology

Annex V

List of qualification which high school applicants can submit in their application form.

Qualification

- College of Liberal Arts
 - Certificate of Test of Practical English Proficiency Test 2nd grade
 - Score of TOEFL, TOEIC or GTEC(Global Test of English Communication)
TOEFL 470(PBT) 150(CBT) 52(IBT) ,TOEIC 550, GTEC 550
 - United Nations Association's Test of English Grade C
- Chinese Proficiency Test Semi-4th grade
 - Chinese Character Certifying examination 2nd grade
 - Zensho【Association of Commercial high school) Proficiency test for Information Processing 1st grade(business information, programming)
 - Jken【Proficiency test for Information) 2nd grade
- Association of technical high school Proficiency test for skill of personal computer 2nd grade
 - Fundamental Information Technology Engineer Examination
 - Software Design & Development Engineer Examination
 - Systems Administrator Examination
 - ICT Proficiency Assessment 2nd grade
 - Mathematics Certification 2nd grade
 - The Japan Chamber of Commerce and Industry Proficiency test for book keeping 2nd grade
 - Zensho(Association of Commercial high school) Proficiency test for bookkeeping 1st grade
 - Zensho(Association of Commercial high school) Proficiency test for information processing 1st grade
 - The Japan Association of Accounting Education proficiency test for book keeping 2nd grade
 - Japanese Proficiency Test 3rd grade
- College of Business Management
 - Department of Business Management
 - Certificate of Test of Practical English Proficiency Test Semi 2nd grade
 - TOEFL 413(PBT) 103(CBT) 34(IBT)
 - TOEIC 420
 - United Nations Association's Test of English Grade C
 - The Japan Chamber of Commerce and Industry Proficiency test for book keeping 2nd grade
 - Zensho(Association of Commercial high school) Proficiency test for bookkeeping 1st grade
 - Zensho(Association of Commercial high school) Proficiency test for information processing 1st grade
 - The Japan Association of Accounting Education Proficiency test for book keeping 2nd grade
 - Systems Administrator Examination
 - Mathematics Certification 2nd grade
 - Japanese Proficiency Test 3rd grade
 - Department of Aviation Management
 - Certificate of Test of Practical English Proficiency Test 2nd grade
 - Score of TOEFL , TOEIC or GTEC
TOEFL 470(PBT) 150(CBT) 52(IBT) TOEIC 550 GTEC 550
 - United Nations Association's Test of English Grade C.
- College of Health and Welfare
 - TOEFL 413(PBT) 103(CBT) 34(IBT)
 - TOEIC 420
 - United Nations Association's Test of English Grade C
 - Japanese Proficiency Test 3rd grade

Annex VI

List of NCUEE subjects

- Foreign Language
English, Listening Comprehension, German, French, Chinese, Korean
- Japanese
Modern and Contemporary Japanese
- Geography and History
World History A, World History B, Japanese A, Japanese B, Geography A Geography B
- Civics
Modern society, Ethics, Politics and Economics
- Mathematics①
Mathematics, Mathematics II, Mathematics A
- Mathematics②
Mathematics II, Mathematics II • B, Basic Industrial Mathematics, Bookkeeping, Information
- Science①
Science B, Biology I
- Science②
Science A, Chemistry I
- Science③
Physics I, Earth Science I